

Tourism as a Factor in Economic Recovery

Cristina BURGHELEA

Hyperion University, Bucharest
crystachy@yahoo.com

Cristina VIŞAN

Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies
krysthina_2005vs@yahoo.com

Abstract. *In recent years tourism industry has become an area of high importance in the European economy, the rate of job creation in this sector exceeded the overall average in the EU. For these reasons it is considered that the tourist industry has an important role in achieving the objectives set by the European Commission under Agenda 2020.*

With a significant tourism potential, Romania could implement a strategy for economic recovery in the tourism and economic activities to support local economic development adjacent to significant regional effects propagated. To assess the potential economic recovery of the Romanian tourism research, the authors conducted a survey based on about one of the most valuable tourist areas of Romania - Bucovina.

Keywords: economic crisis; economic recovery; tourism industry; cultural tourism.

JEL Codes: L83, R53.

REL Codes: 14F, 16E.

1. Introduction

Global economic recession has affected most of the structures of the economy from the monetary sector on the real economy effects: increased funding costs, rising unemployment and declining economic activity have affected the income, corporate profits have declined significantly, bankrupting many of them⁽¹⁾. Currently, most economies are faced with major adjustments, including the need to stabilize the public debt, financial sector reforms. In many of these economies, the financial sector is still vulnerable to shocks, and the slow recovery is due to reduced tax incentives. Economic activity in developing countries depend on the demand in advanced economies: IMF forecast global activity increased by 4.8% in 2010 and is expected to increase 4.2% in 2011, with a temporary decrease in the second half of 2010 and first half of 2011. Production in developing countries is expected to have increased by 7.1% in 2010, following an increase of 6.4% for 2011.

In the event conditions and the need to overcome global recession minimum point called the economic crisis, the smaller states need to make serious efforts to find new ways to attract foreign capital, namely to use all available means to overcome economic recession. Among the economic recovery means, supporting the development of tourism has an important place because of the potential impact on regional endogenous growth.

However, in terms of infrastructure and tourist facilities, our country is far from being called a tourist attraction, with a number of tourist facilities 3.23 times lower than the European average in 2009 (according to data from Eurostat). In terms of demand on tourist nights spent by residents and non-residents in Romania, in 2009 it was 4.77 times fewer nights spent in tourist locations than the EU average. Because of the lack of a coherent strategy, Romanian tourism in 2009 reached the second lowest in Europe, as a percentage of GDP (according to the World Tourism Organization), 5.7% of GDP, while the European average was 10% of GDP. There are European countries that receive significant revenues from tourism such as Croatia (25% of GDP), Austria (14.5% of GDP) or Slovakia (12.6% of GDP).

Considering these aspects, Romania's economic recovery efforts could be directed towards developing the tourism industry: having multiplier effect on national economy by creating jobs, attracting surplus labor from rural areas, respectively by a positive influence on the balance of payments.

2. Opportunities for improving Bucovina tourism

To assess the potential of tourism sector, in support of Romania's economic recovery we have focused our research efforts on one of the most important tourist areas in our country - Bucovina. To achieve the objectives of the research, it was conducted a representative survey study area. The overall aim of this survey was the need to obtain data and information on tourism in Bucovina and possibilities for improvement.

The survey was conducted during January and February 2011. Appropriate target audience of this survey was chosen taking into account the interests of Bucovina as a tourist area. To do this we must ensure that work is included in the sample of potential tourists and not especially visitors (people who move through the area for business or visiting relatives). In addition, we aimed to avoid the subjective attitudes of "local patriotism" by avoiding to include in the analysis of Moldova. Taking into account these considerations and the limited financial resources we chose the area of investigation: Bucharest-Ilfov region and South-Muntenia, plus the counties of Buzau and Braila. Starting from the fact that the population structure is known as a variable strongly correlated with the subject of the research sample reflects the regional structure built of the total population, using stratified sampling. Given the requirements of representativeness of the literature we have assembled a sample of 400 subjects. Following verification and validation of questionnaires we obtained a database of 312 observations covering the study area.

The questionnaire consisted of 32 operational questions and three questions for the identification and structuring. Questions were divided into six operational groups of interest to know the socio-economic characteristics of the area's heritage and tourism potential of the area, its contribution to the tourist area of Romania's economic and social cohesion, respectively the possibilities of integration into European and national tourism industry.

Questionnaire was processed using SPSS version 14 for the Academy of Economic Studies licensed. Structurally, the questionnaire was divided into six areas of interest: Knowledge of Bucovina in the context of North-Eastern region of our country, knowledge of the tourism in North-East, knowledge of the cultural potential Bucovina, Bucovina strategy of transforming the most important tourist areas of Romania and the European Union, cultural tourism as a source of fulfillment Bucovina human life and social cohesion, need to integrate cultural tourism in the tourism industry Bucovina in Romania and the European Union.

For this article we choose the most relevant questions for the tourist development of Bucovina. The first question of the questionnaire was aimed at

the perception that the Bucovina is region of Romania. *For you, Bucovina is known as a region: a) economic; b) historical; c) culture; d) religious; e) natural geography.* It can be seen (Figure 1) that the Bucovina region is seen as cultural (51% of respondents) – history (49.7%) and natural geography (49.4%). Very few respondents (5.1%) perceive Bucovina as an economic area. The fact can be explained by trying to avoid confusion between the region and economic development regions (NUTS 2) and through membership in the poorest region in the area of economic development in Romania (2).

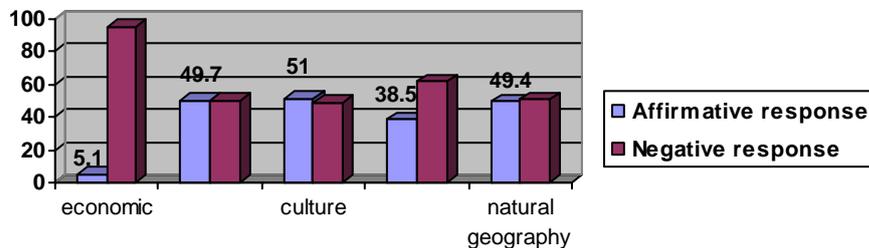


Figure 1. Response distribution for question no. 1

Another item of interest to our study area was the quality of infrastructure. *Bucovina infrastructure in terms of tourism, you think: a) very good; b) good; c) satisfactory; d) not satisfactory.* This time (Figure 2) very good and good responses are barely over half (56%) indicating once again the gap between natural and human talents in Romania's tourist offer.

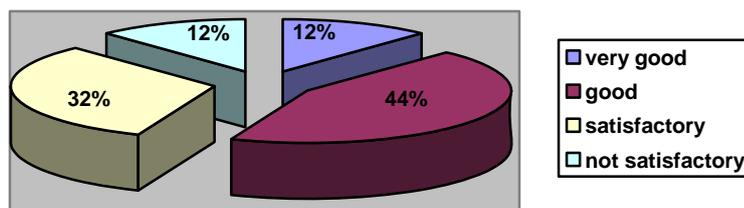


Figure 2. Response distribution for question no. 3

As the tourist attraction force of the Bucovina area can be amplified by the tourist objectives of the North-East Region, another focus of our survey was the level of knowledge of the legacy of this tourist region by the target audience. *North-Eastern Region, from which Bucovina is part, has the*

following specific forms of tourism: a) mountain tourism; b) spa; c) tourism business; d) cultural tourism; e) scientific.

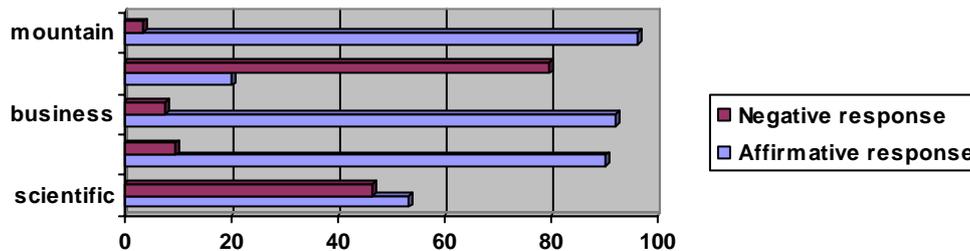


Figure 3. Response distribution for question no. 6

This time (Figure 3) target audience no longer appears to be well informed. There are several elements contradictory responses to this question:

- It is possible some “eclipse” of the North-Eastern region by the target area of Bucovina. This area is perceived as a tourist attraction of cultural interest, the entire Northeast region is seen as attractive for cultural tourism (80% of responses). Although it is known the outstanding contribution to Romanian culture of this area (M. Eminescu, I. Creangă, V. Alecsandri, N. Iorga, G. Enescu, G. Bacovia, etc.) however the gap is very large compared with other responses.
- Amid declining health tourism, respondents do not perceive that this area is the “(Touristic) Pearl of Moldova” – Slănic Moldova spa is still operational, unlike the former stations of local interest Baltatesti and Oglinzi.
- The target audience seems to like the mountain tourism due to proximity: for Bucharest - the Bucegi mountains, and for other respondents - Fagaras mountains, Buzau mountains, or Vrancea mountains. Thus, mountain tourism is not seen as a representative form of tourism by 56% despite the endowment of the North-East region “jewels mounted” like Ceahlau mountain, Cheile Bicazului, Rarau-Giumalau, Rodna mountain, mountain resorts Durau and Vatra Dornei, etc.
- Although in the North East region there are three universities – Iasi, Bacau and Suceava – that host each year science events of national and international interest, very few respondents (5.1%) recognize scientific tourism opportunity.

- Only responses on the desirability of business tourism seem to be in tune with reality (North-East is the poorest in Romania), only 11% of respondents indicating this opportunity.

Relevance to research objectives depends on respondents' opinions of their interest for certain forms of tourism. *For you, do you think are interesting forms of tourism the following: a) mountain tourism; b) spa; c) tourism business; d) cultural tourism; e) rural tourism.*

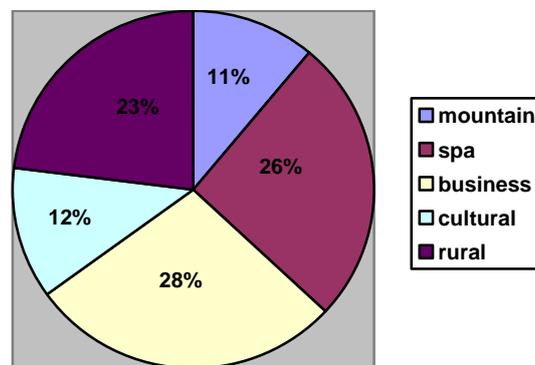


Figure 4. Response distribution for question no. 7

Answers (Figure 4) are particularly interesting for the research objectives. This is because it shows that the target audience has a different profile of tourist interest in relation to tourist facilities in the North East region. Thus:

- the majority the respondents (28%) are interested in business tourism (we included here travel for work) - but only 11% of them find such opportunities in the North-East;
- health tourism as the second option (26%) is inconsistent with the perception of this opportunity (only 10.7%) of the answers, nor to endowment of the region (Slănic Moldova);
- a third option is rural tourism (23%) that could be covered by area facilities (many hostels in rural areas);
- cultural tourism and the mountain for which the region has remarkable objectives has very little interest among respondents (12% and 11%).

Correlation of interest for different forms of tourism with consumption of tourism products is very interesting. *In the past five years have you practiced the following forms of tourism: a) mountain tourism; b) spa; c) business tourism; d) circuit tourism; e) cultural tourism.*

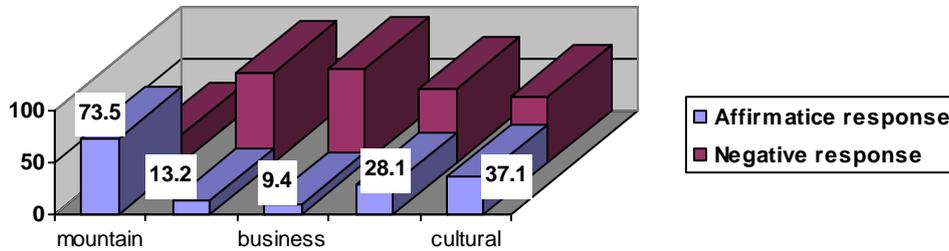


Figure 5. Response distribution for question no. 8

Comparing the distribution of answers to this question with that of the previous question (no. 7) we can see a significant change in the areas of interest in relation to consumer experience tourism products in the past five years (Figure 5). The overthrow of the view is radical: tourist experience is overwhelming supported (73.5%) by mountain tourism while the interest for this form of tourism lies in last place (11%). A second option of the tourist experience – cultural tourism (37.1%) – ranks second lowest on interest.

Knowledge of the Bucovina cultural potential concerns about the spirit of respondents believe the region's history, traditions, costumes, crafts and creative elements.

For the tourism in Bucovina the historical spirit of this region is considered: a) dominant; b) significantly; c) normal; d) useful.

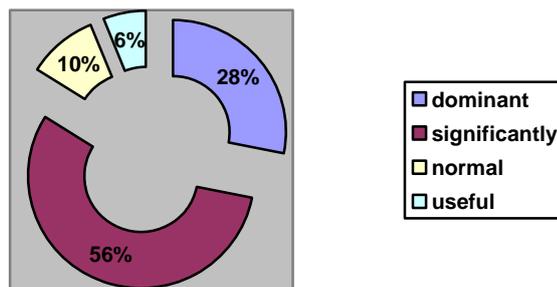


Figure 6. Response distribution for question no. 11

It is noted (Figure 6) that the “historical spirit” of tourism is the main feature of the Bucovina (28% of respondents considered it the dominant, and 56% is considered significant). These responses match those of the first question, where 49.7% of respondents perceive Bucovina as a historical region.

Bucovina's customs represents for tourism a key of: a) great interest; b) high interest; c) normal; d) attractive.

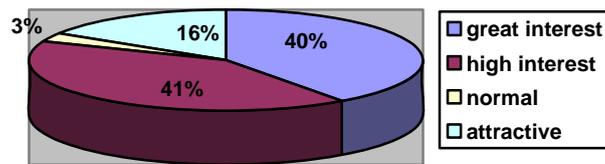


Figure 7. Response distribution for question no. 12

The overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) consider traditions as a factor high or of great interest to the tourist offer of Bucovina (Figure 7). Beyond the clichés and automatism in the perception and evaluation of areas of the country we can not fail to notice an important factor for defining the tourist area Bucovina.

Folk specific area, beautiful people, moral cleanliness is for you: a) an unrivaled attraction; b) reference point; c) something normal; d) elements of sustainability; e) irrelevant items.

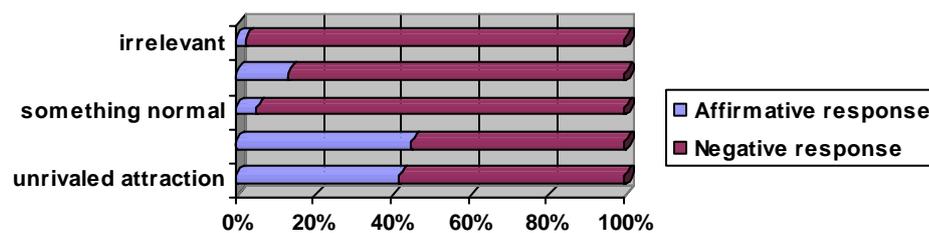


Figure 8. Response distribution for question no. 14

Costumes component (Figure 8) of tourism in Bucovina is rather a reference point (42%) and unrivaled attraction (40%). This means that, although taken together, the two choices for folk make a possible element of the tourist

area's strengths, however, the folk begins to decrease as importance to today's tourists.

Crafts and other items of human creativity represents for you: a) special attractions; b) factors of interest; c) commonplace; d) things uninteresting; e) news.

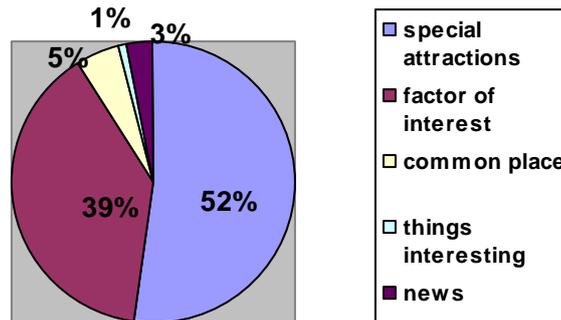


Figure 9. Response distribution for question no. 15

It seems that the crafts are the main point of attraction of the tourist offer traditional area of Bucovina (Figure 9), since most respondents (52%) consider them as special attractions, and 39% of them consider factor of interest.

Bucovina transformation in one of the most important tourist areas of Romania and the European Union requires a well-based tourism strategy. Opinions of target audience could provide very important suggestions for the design of such a strategy. An important step in this direction would be the development of a tourism plan for development of the Bucovina.

A tourism plan under which to proceed in practice for the implementation of tourism strategy for Bucovina must include: a) area delimitation of tourist interest; b) the definition of types of tourism areas; c) establishment of touristic responsibilities; d) develop a touristic budget; e) tourism marketing factors.

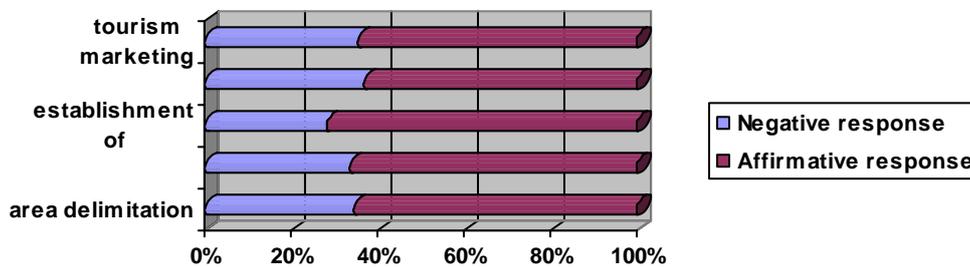


Figure 10. Response distribution for question no. 18

There is consensus on the need to develop a tourism plan for Bucovina (Figure 10), and respondents considered largely (over 63%) that all elements are important for such a plan. The most important factor (71.8%) is considered to be the establishment of responsibilities for those involved in the development of a tourism development plan of the Bucovina.

The local urban and/or rural community must be integrated in tourism support by means of: a) adequate infrastructure; b) the necessary institutional; c) appropriate education; d) traditional promotions; e) religious.

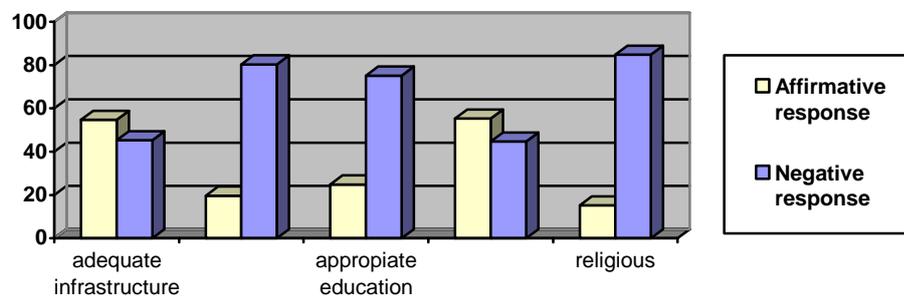


Figure 11. Response distribution for question no. 20

Clearly the best part of the local community is, in the opinion of respondents (Figure 11), in support of the tourism product through traditional means (55.3%). The next item that would be necessary to support the local community is linked to the development of adequate infrastructure for tourism (54.7%). The other choice is not rated by respondents as being important enough to involve the local community.

Since Bucovina is perceived as a cultural-historic area and its facilities can support an outstanding tourist offer in this respect our study tried to capture the deeper meanings of cultural heritage of Bucovina for fulfilling the aspirations of respondents to the fundamental values and cultural cohesion can sustain implicit social cohesion.

How would you rate the quality of cultural tourism in Bucovina compared to your expectations: a) superior to my expectations; b) above my expectations; c) as expected; d) below expectations; e) significantly lower than my expectations.

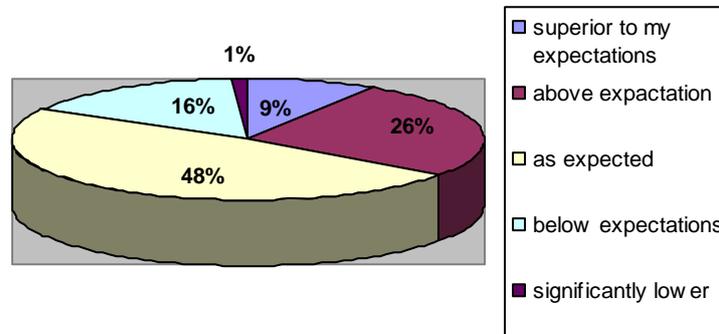


Figure 12. Response distribution for question no. 21

It is noted (Figure 12) that the quality of Bucovina tourism largely corresponds (48%) target audience expectations, but that there is a significant percentage to those who believes that this level exceeds expectations (33%). That may be gratifying in view of the cultural feature - the area associated with historical perspectives of its development potential.

What impressed you in Bucovina? a) landscape; b) monasteries; c) traditions; d) hospitality; e) craftsmanship.

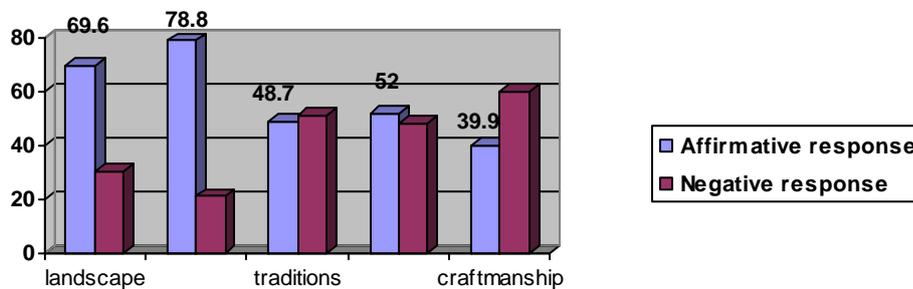


Figure 13. Response distribution for question no. 22

As expected (Figure 13) famous monasteries in the area have impressed most respondents (78.8%), followed by landscape (69.6%) and the hospitality of locals (52%). Although important elements to Bucovina heritage, traditions and crafts impressed respondents in a lesser extent (48.7% and 39.9%). In light of those answers we can say that there are elements with a strong impact on potential tourists who could support the development of a competitive tourist offers in the Bucovina.

Monasteries visited impressed you by: a) harmony with the spirit of the place; b) the beauty of style; c) the spiritual food you received; d) ability to make us love past; e) how to cultivate faith and hope.

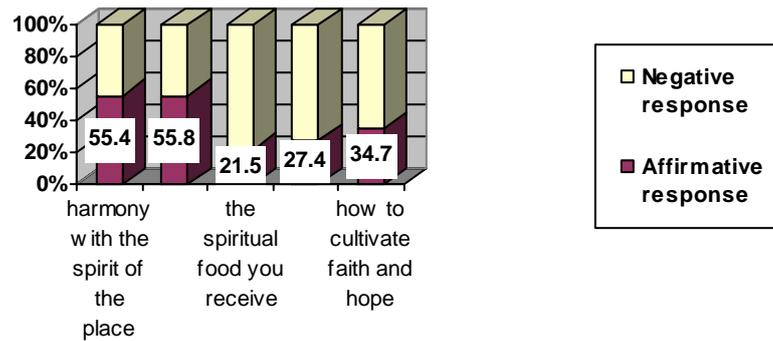


Figure 14. Response distribution for question no. 23

Without a spectacular distribution (with high values for affirmative response), the responses clearly delimited (Figure 14) harmony with the spirit of place (55.4% - absolutely natural for a spiritual establishments) and beauty style (55.8 %). It should be noted that the other choice do not support a significant extent (21.5%, 27.4% and 34.7%) other tourist attraction spiritual characteristics – the monasteries.

Developing a competitive tourism offers the potential of cultural exception of Bucovina, requires a coordinated effort, and involvement of government (central and local) is essential.

What do you think of to state involvement in the development of cultural tourism in Bucovina? a) very good; b) good; c) neutral; d) poor; e) very bad.

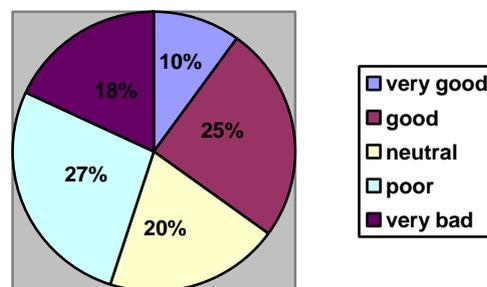


Figure 15. Response distribution for question no. 25

Interesting is the high percentage (20%) of those who have a neutral opinion to this problem (Figure 15), however understandable given that local and/or central government support in sustaining tourism is often lacking, and it is not well highlighted. Beyond this neutral feedback we can find that respondents are rather dissatisfied (45% of opinions supporting poor and very poor alternatives) than satisfied (35% very good or good alternatives).

Given that the cultural heritage of Bucovina is well known and appreciated by the audience it appears normal the concern for the area's tourism product integration in Romanian specialized circuit, respectively the European Union.

List of Romanian tourism areas that you think we can join the EU: a) Western Carpathians; b) Danube Delta; c) North of Moldova; d) Olt Valley; e) Transylvania Center.

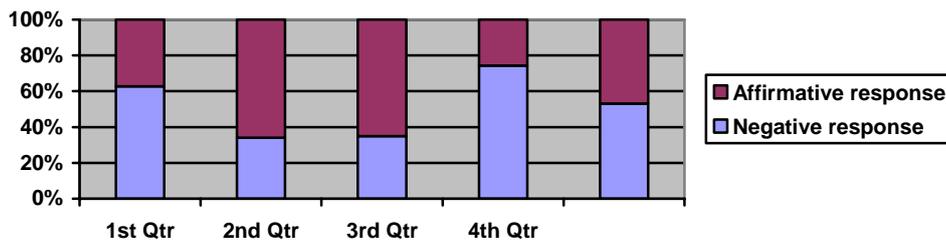


Figure 16. Response distribution for question no. 26

It is noted (Figure 16) that Northern Moldavia (Bucovina) is considered by most respondents (65%) as impetus to offer real possibilities of integration of European tourists. Only Delta tourism region is higher with 66% score, which is normal in view of its unique natural heritage in the EU. Of the other regions only Transylvania Center have significantly approach the limit to positive statements (46.8%). This means there is actually a particular interest for the area of Bucovina, and its potential for cultural tourism is considered as representative of EU.

Integrated cultural tourism duration: a) 14 to 21 days; b) 10-12 days; c) 5-7 days; d) 2-3 days; e) weekends.

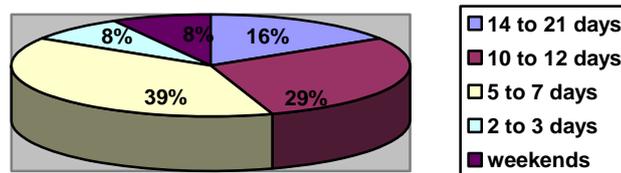


Figure 17. Response distribution for question no. 27

Opinions are varied (Figure 17), but focus on stays for 5-7 days (39%), respectively for 10 to 12 days (29%). This means that the offer of cultural tourism in Bucovina is seen as a main destination and not transit.

For what purpose have you visited Bucovina? a) for work; b) travel; c) religious pilgrimage; d) business; e) I have not visited.

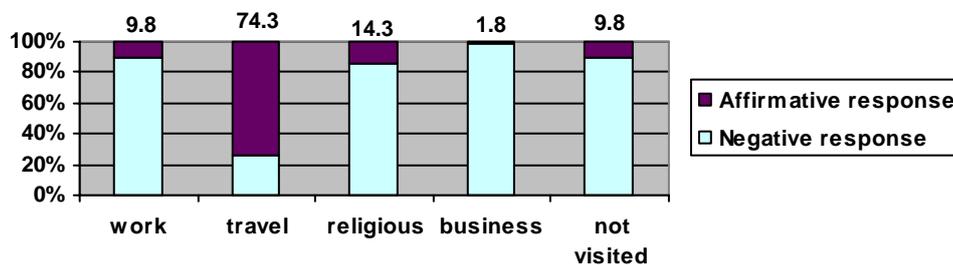


Figure 18. Response distribution for question no. 31

Response distribution (Figure 18) highlights the correct selection to the sample since the vast majority of respondents visited tourist Bucovina (74.3%), religious motivation also contributed to the knowledge of the area of interest values (14.3%). Only a very small (9.8%) of those surveyed haven't visited the area.

3. Conclusions

Bucovina is perceived by the audience as a tourist area with great interest that we could integrate into to EU tourism industry. Predominantly cultural-historical character of the area maintains its tourist offer specialization in cultural profile.

We could say that subjects perceive Bucovina as a “treasure of the Romanian traditions legacy”. Among the most important elements of this treasure we found: crafts (traditional), gourmet cuisine, and folk respectively.

However, the survey reveals interesting contradictions between the answers to questions revealing a poor perception of the tourism potential of North-Eastern part of Bucovina. We noted: ignorance of the region's tourist gift items, the disparity between areas of interest and the tourist experience and tourism product development complexity referral to the North-East region. Clearly the explanation of these differences is largely a deficiency of information on North-East region, due to totally inadequate promotional programs that do not take into account domestic demand.

Respondents felt the need to develop a strategy for improve integration Bucovina into highly competitive area of tourism in the EU. However, the target audience does not have sufficient powers to properly assess the direction of developing a specific strategy, respectively to strong elements that could support such a strategy.

Although Bucovina cultural tourism is valued as an important opportunity for the tourist development to the area and its elements of interest are well revealed by the target audience, there isn't adequate support from government. Moreover, any recommendations for improving the tourist tourists of Bucovina not show a clear perception of desirable improvements for the development of this offer.

The target audience believes that Bucovina cultural tourism offer has remarkable qualities for integration into EU and national tourist circuit, but felt the acute shortage of adequate promotion of this offer. Furthermore, with the caveat that tourism can contribute significantly at improving their cultural contributions and has a positive influence for people of other regions of the country and especially for young people.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- (1) Europe estimated 200,000 insolvencies in 2009, according to Euler Hermes.
- (2) See D. Ailenei, A. Cristescu, "Regional distribution of inflationary pressures in Romania", *Romanian Journal of Economic Forecasting*, 4/2010.

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