

TOURIST DEMAND: AN APPROCH FOR IAȘI, PIATRA NEAMȚ AND VATRA DORNEI CITIES

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Abstract:

The assessment of urban tourist behavior, identification of the main motivations behind the decision to practice this form of tourism, is a necessary and important stage for the background of tourism policies and strategies in a given locality. The urban tourist requires special attention because it customizes a series of specific characteristics that are closely related to those of the urban areas. To develop a city in terms of tourism it is necessary more than just an inventory of natural and anthropic resources in order to transform them into a competitive tourism product. A more accurate analysis of the dynamic in tourism must consider more accurate information on tourism demand. Thus, based on its own investigations, the article aims to highlight the main features of the tourists who choose the cities of Iași, Piatra Neamț and Vatra Dornei as a holiday destination.

Keywords: cities, tourist demand, urban tourism, tourist facilities

1. Introduction

Against the background of excessive urbanization which contemporary society knows, the city became the place of origin and at the same time the destination for a growing number of tourists. Combining a rich tourism potential, an important technical and material accommodation base, food, entertainment, transport, many cities have introduced tourism to the local development priorities list. The transformation of urban areas in tourist destinations is gradual and made on the initiative of groups of entrepreneurs who aim to develop business in the tourism sector, or as a result of local authorities.

Statistics show that urban environment attracts visitors predominantly whit urban origin, generally from similar sized cities whit the visited place, in desire to compare new places visited with the residence (Simon, Căndea et al, 2009).

Tourism demand is composed of all persons who have the desire to move periodically and temporarily outside their residence for reasons other than to provide a remunerated activity at the place of destination, including all goods

and services that materializes in tourism products required by potential tourists (Coccean and Dezsi, 2001, pp.77). Tourism demand is based on a number of economic determinants, socio-psychological and exogenous factors that are responsible for the intensity and scale of tourist flows (Page, 2003).

Tourism demand has a number of features determined by the specific activities that make up the tourism product. Tourism demand is composed of all persons who have the desire to move periodically and temporarily outside their residence for reasons other than to provide a paid work at the destination (Cristureanu, 1992, pp.106).

Analysis of tourism demand is made quantitatively and qualitatively, from the space of origin to the motivational aspects for which tourists choose a specific tourist destination. Evaluation of the number of tourists is difficult due to questionable reliability of statistical data and under-registration of the domestic tourism (Muntele and Iașu, 2006). Tourism demand requires a more detailed analysis of the direct importance which presents,

but also indirectly, essential in predicting tourist management.

Tourists from urban areas are different and have distinct motivations underlying their journey. Thus, the various types in which tourists can be assigned vary depending on their motivations and expectations. Insufficient knowledge on urban tourist can attract a number of difficulties which are reflected directly on tourism supply and demand in a particular city.

Most publications on the analysis of urban tourism aimed at the presentation of the physical-geographical frame, historical development, current economic functions or natural and architectural heritage inventory. Thus, there is the small number of studies in the field of tourism geography to present the particularities of urban tourism demand: tourist motivation, their origin, the budget, quality of service from the area, the importance of landmarks, demographic data, etc.

2. Methodology

The importance of tourism for the cities of Iași, Piatra Neamț and Vatra Dornei was individualized in a field surveys that used the questionnaire as a tool of investigation. In the framework of the questionnaire we have chosen a simple language, concise phrases and sentences to avoid ambiguity, in order to be clearly understood and interpreted together by the subjects whom it is addressed. 100 questionnaires were applied for each individual city during July-November 2013.

The questionnaire applied in the three cities has two parts; a first part which aims to outline the profile of tourists visiting the cities of Iași, Piatra Neamț, Vatra Dornei and the second part is mainly focused on describing the respondent (questions about gender, age, origin, education level, field of activity).

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions in the form of grid with one answer allowed or more possible answers. The first four questions (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4) capture the motivations why these cities were chosen as a tourist destination but also aspects about the length of stay, type of voyage and average expenditure per day. The following four questions (Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8) have sought to identify the means of transport used the chosen accommodation facilities and included services. Questions Q9, Q10, Q11 aimed at assessing the possible attractions and tourist facilities of the city. The quality and diversity of existing tourist facilities within cities influence the decision of potential tourists to choose that destination. Socio-demographic data were summarized in the Table 1 that shows a balanced distribution at the gender level, but varied on age groups and completed studies. Regarding the place of origin of tourists, it is noted a preference for cities of Iași and Piatra Neamț among those coming from Moldova (Bacău, Vaslui, Botoșani, Focșani, Suceava, Galați). Only in the case of Vatra Dornei, it is noted a greater number of tourists from other counties outside Moldova, mainly from the cities of Bistrița, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Craiova, Giurgiu, explained by the character of the seaside resort which the town has.

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondent

		Iași	Piatra Neamț	Vatra Dornei
Gender	Male	42%	53%	41%
	Female	58%	47%	59%
Age	<25	20%	27%	17%
	26-35	31%	43%	34%
	36-45	26%	18%	10%
	46-65	18%	9%	28%
	>65	5%	3%	11%
Origin	Localities in Moldova	70%	62%	58%
	Other localities	30%	38%	42%
Studies completed	Middle school	7%	5%	10%
	High school	44%	47%	38%
	Faculty	28%	34%	41%
	Master	19%	14%	10%
	PhD	2%	0%	1%

3. Results and discussions

To have a more meaningful image of the main motivations underlying the choice of the cities Iași, Vatra Dornei and Piatra Neamț I realized Figure 1. Thus, it is noted that the main motivation of the tourists who chose the city of Iași is cultural sightseeing, shopping, business trips / conferences or visiting relatives. This fact is understandable because of the cultural importance given by the universities that bring prestige to the city and maintain cultural interest by organizing regular theatrical, musical, cultural events. More recently, the

appearance of Palas Shopping Center is an important point of attraction both for the inhabitants of Iași and tourists, being the main place of relaxation through the wide range of services offered. Motivations related to leisure, sports or transit showed lower values. In the case of Vatra Dornei leisure related motivations emerge and have an important role in the tourism sector and for people of this city. Motivations related to cultural monuments, recreation and transit contribute to the choice of Piatra Neamț city as a tourist destination.

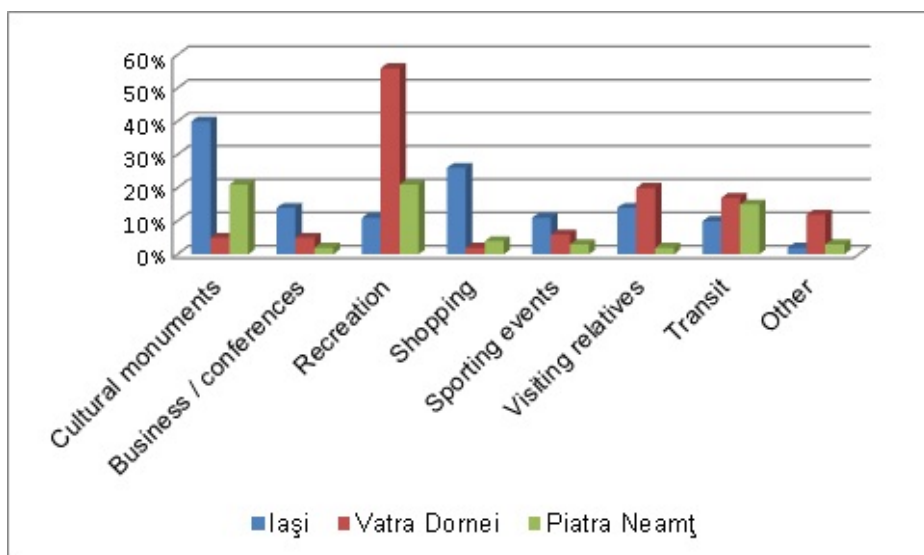


Figure 1. The distribution of motivations underlying the choice of urban tourist destinations

Results on the length of stay showed a reduced duration in the cities analyzed (Figure 2), the majority of respondents opting for the 2-3 days response. The reduced length of stay in urban areas is due to the fact that a large proportion of journeys made are for representative sightseeing or to participate at the artistic and cultural life. Therefore this form of tourism is also called weekend tourism or city-break, precisely because it is

intended as an escape into a new space, for a short period, to take the pulse of the visited town. Reduced length of stay can be influenced by how tourists perceive and assess accommodation services, catering and entertainment. Only in the city of Vatra Dornei, stays exceed more than three days due to spa treatments that attract and retain tourists for a longer period of time.

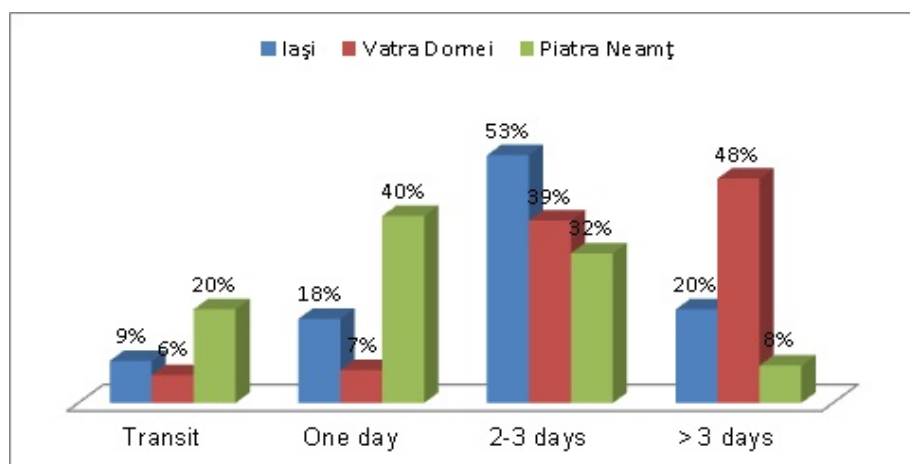


Figure 2. Length of stay

By the degree of mobility of tourists it emerges itinerary tourism which is

characterized by a high degree of mobility in which is desired to visit many places

and static tourism, which involves spending the holidays in the same place regardless of its duration (Figure 3). Given the fact that most of the respondents who chose the city of Vatra Dornei as a tourist destination have a high age, it is understandable that static tourism meet the travel motivations of mature people who prefer to relax or come to treatment in this city. The variety of cultural resources and the diversity of

options that tourists can choose from Iasi may represent an explanation for those who prefer a static holiday. Tourists who choose Piatra Neamț are young and eager to relax at the swimming pool in summer or practicing winter sports. An opportunity to tap attractive resources near these cities could be established by the development of routes / specialized tourism circuits to include other localities.

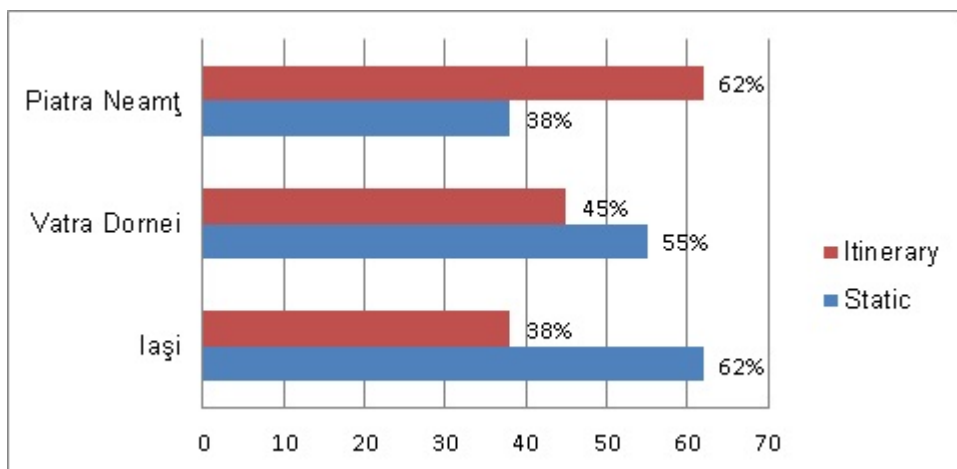


Figure 3. Options of respondents about the type staying

Regarding the average expense that a person makes during the stay, most respondents who chose the city Vatra Dornei limited the expenditure to less than 100 RON (Figure 4). One explanation may be represented by small catering and accommodation rates practiced in the

area, but also for existing offers including accommodation, treatment and care for older people at low prices. For Piatra Neamț most answers were included in the category 101-150 RON, and in the case of Iași in category of 151-200 RON.

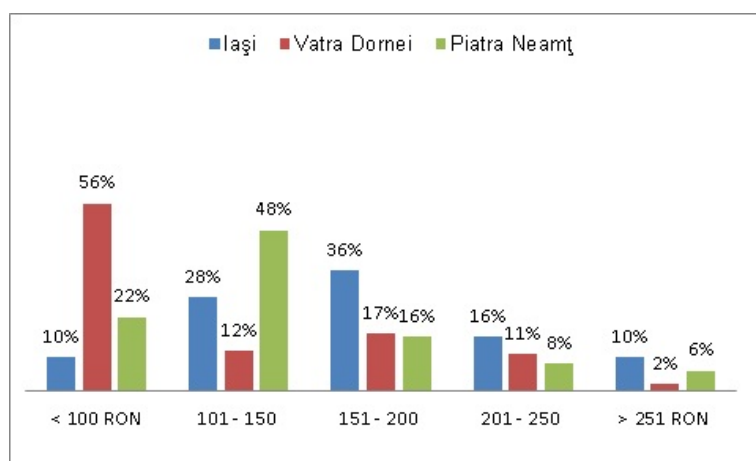


Figure 4. Distribution of answers on the average amount spent per day on travel packages

To determine the type of transport used by tourists, we chose the method of answers in the grid, with a rating from 1 (never used) to 5 (very often) for each type of transportation. Clearly stands for the three cities, the preference for personal car, which is arguably the fastest and most convenient way to travel (Figure 5). Other means of transport used,

register lower values, the train and bus standing out. This aspect is also due to the relatively small distances between the departure city and destination city, because we do not have a distance like that from Bucharest to Iași where we would probably have had much higher values for air transport.

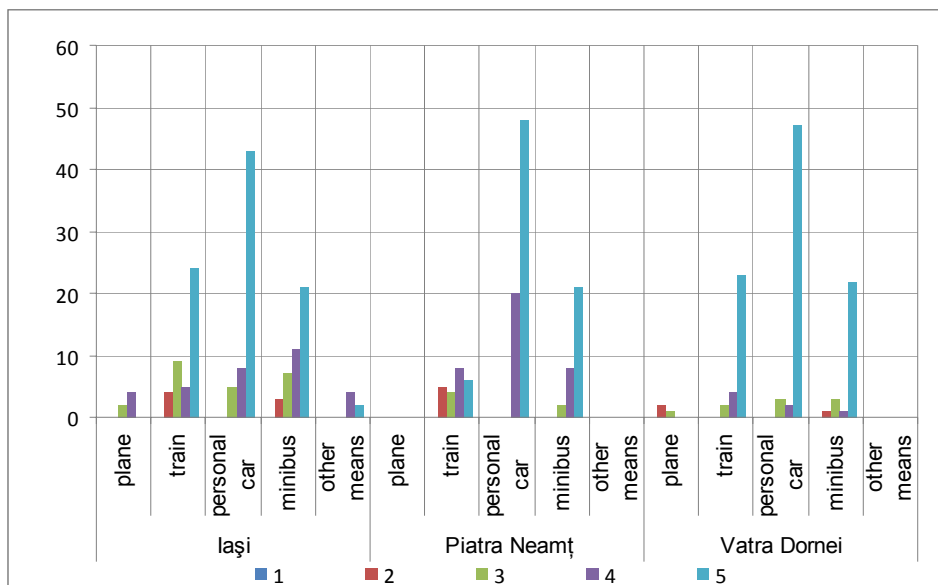


Figure 5. The main means of transport used by tourists

In developing the travel, accommodation is the next stage after transport that targets through its content the creation of conditions and comfort for hosting and recreation of travelers. It was opted for a question with answers in the form of grids for each unit (Figure 6). Thus, hotel accommodation units have been detached in the cities of Iași and Vatra Dornei and boarding houses in

Piatra Neamț. In general, the hotels have a competitive advantage compared to other accommodation, because services are complemented by a range of additional benefits that are directly related to the category of comfort that the hotel owns (food services, information and intermediation, cultural and artistic activities).

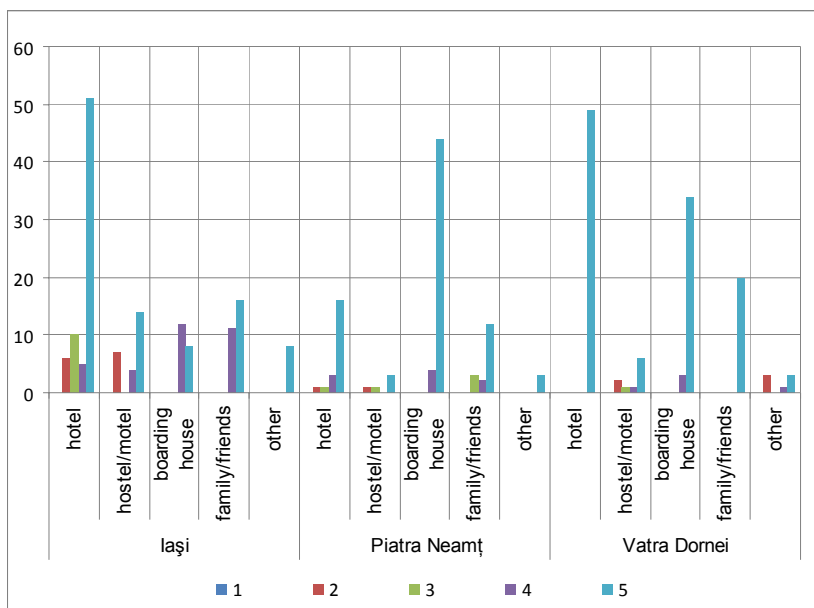


Figure 6. Structure of the main accommodation used by tourists

For accommodation establishments booking service is an important element that has as main objective providing the accommodation you want and additional services at a certain time. Booking system provides several benefits for tourists, who can make reservation by phone or on-line, thus avoiding visiting the places concerned. Most of the tourists who have chosen as holiday destination the cities Iași, Piatra Neamț and Vatra Dornei

turned to the reservation service (Figure 7). This explains the fact that we are dealing with tourism activities prepared in advance and that tourism activity is not random. On the other hand, this means that there is a concern for budget spent, focusing on its predictability. In other news, Romanian tourists become more and more connected to technology and its benefits.

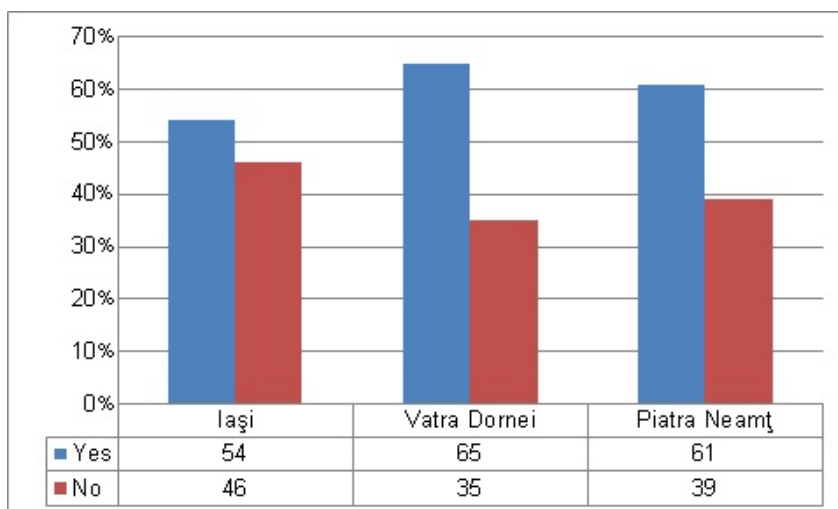


Figure 7. Structure of tourists who used reservation service

The distribution of answers on the services required in booking shows mainly the tourists preferences for packages that include accommodation with breakfast on offer (Figure 8). Full board is chosen by tourists in Vatra

Dornei who follow medical spa treatment and have meals included in the chosen travel package. A small number of tourists turn to the transport services provided by hotels or hostels.

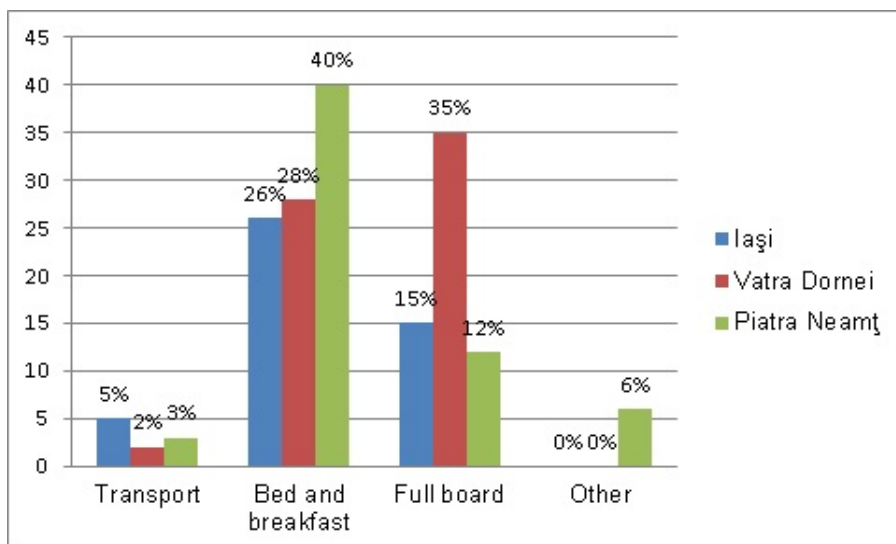


Figure 8. Distribution of answers regarding the services required in booking

The attractiveness of a city consists in a number of common elements, but which have a different weight, depending on the specifics of each city. The identification concerns a set of associations that management wants to generate or maintain in the consumer's mind; it is a sum of special characteristics that distinguishes it from other places, as a result of the interactions between all the urban elements (Rainisto, 2003). The attractiveness of Iași, in perception of the respondents, is built primarily on elements of local heritage and architecture, which is supported by imposing buildings like the Palace of Culture, Three Hierarchs Church, Metropolitan Church of Moldova, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University; festivals and cultural events, student organized

festivals at the end of the academic year, music festivals, outdoors theater and movies; shopping or business centers (Figure 9).

The attractiveness of Piatra Neamț city of is based on the quality and diversity of leisure structures, plus elements of local heritage and architecture, city accessibility, the kindness and hospitality of the people. At the level of leisure structures, the ski slope stands out, the town swimming pool and gondola, which are the major attractions for both residents and tourists.

The attractiveness of Vatra Dornei city is supported by existing recreational structures, the kindness of people, architectural heritage and city accessibility.

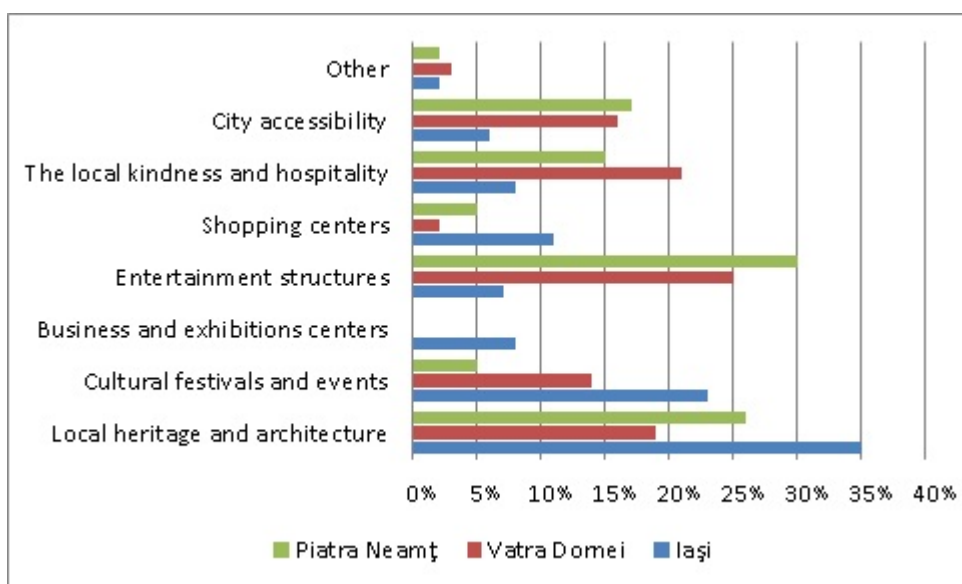


Figure 9. What do you appreciate most about the city visited?

Tourist facilities must permanently readjust and recondition to the tourism requirements and demands. More than half of respondents believe that it is necessary to develop new tourist facilities in the cities of Vatra Dornei, Piatra Neamț and Iași (Figure 10). At the level of mountain towns, leisure is in many cases an important argument when choosing the holiday destination. Thus, this function

manages to differentiate tourism offers in mountain towns that are reflected directly in the tourist movement. To remain competitive in the tourism market, existing tourist facilities should be modernized continuously and design new constructions in accordance with the specific of each city and tourists requirements.

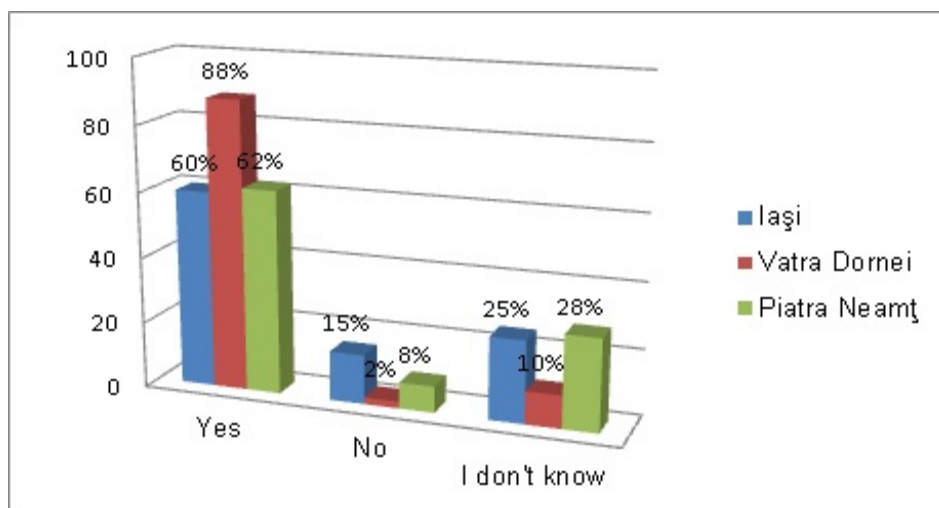


Figure 10. Do you consider necessary the development of new tourist facilities?

The development of new designs and artistic events will contribute to the increase of tourism attractiveness. Thus,

for Iași would be required from the tourists point of view the development of new events in culture, sports and leisure (for

example: supporting concerts by renowned artists, conducting more competitions of national importance) (Figure 11). In the case of Vatra Dornei, respondents believe that leisure services should be further developed, because they are the primary means of individualization of the tourist offer.

Among leisure facilities encountered in Vatra Dornei stands out: pools, fitness rooms (many of these features can be found in accommodation establishments) or the opportunity to practice extreme activities such as rafting, paragliding, mountain biking, skiing, etc.

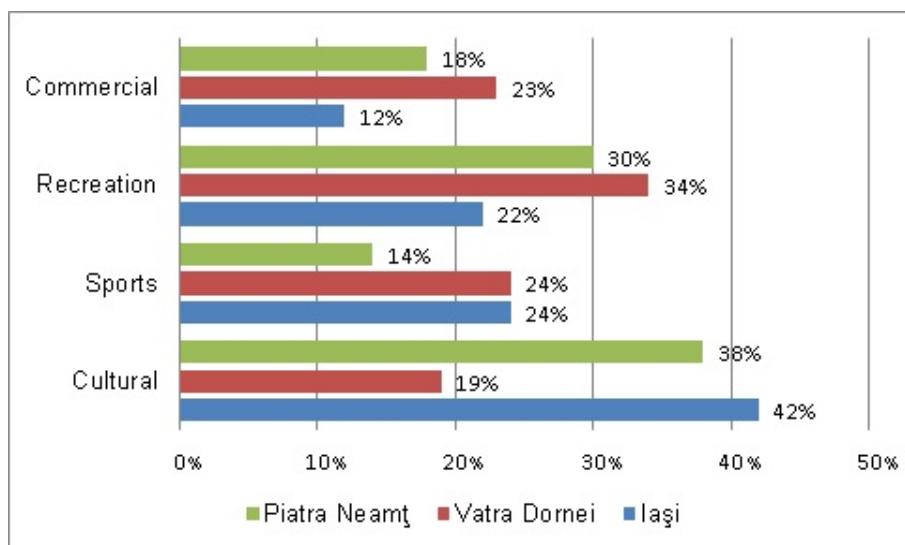


Figure 11. The area in which there should be made new equipment and events for tourists.

4. Conclusions

Survey results applied in the cities of Iași, Piatra Neamț and Vatra Dornei are designed to highlight the main features of tourists who travel to these cities for tourism purposes and to contribute to the development of policies and strategies for revitalizing urban tourism. Knowing the tourists profile, tour operators will be able to design a tourist offer to clearly match the demands of this segment of tourists.

Tourists in urban areas have a number of different motivations compared to tourists who choose to practice other forms of tourism.

Developing a competitive urban tourism product must consider the continuous improvement of the components from the tourist offer, which must be in accordance with the requirements of tourists and residents.

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