

Satisfaction of Generations X and Baby Boomers with tourist services in resorts from the Subcarpathians of Oltenia, in line with sustainable tourism destination development

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Abstract

Introduction. In the context of sustainable tourism development, tourist satisfaction looked at from the perspective of the experience lived in the destination and the quality of services rendered by service providers is one of the directions in which researchers point their attention. In this context, the purpose of this study is to measure the satisfaction of Generations X (GX) and Baby Boomers (GBB) with tourist services in balneal resorts, seen through the perspective of the sustainable development of tourism destinations. **Material and method.** Methodology consisted in the survey method, by applying the semi-structured questionnaire tool on a sample of tourists visiting the balneal resorts in the Subcarpathians of Oltenia between July and October 2019. **Results and discussions.** The results show that satisfaction with the access to and inside the destination is good, but the infrastructure requires modernization. Satisfaction with tourist services is good, but it requires the improvement of recreational facilities and treatment services, especially for the members of Generation X. As far as accommodation services are concerned, even though they received the most positive feedback, the vast majority of facilities have medium level classification. Direct or indirect interaction with locals, hotel staff, and local authorities is valued as good towards very good. On the whole, it is necessary to increase satisfaction for GX and GBB tourists, as this will bring greater benefits for all interested parties: hotel owners and staff, tourists, local authorities, and even the local community, who can become more actively involved in the tourist market. **Conclusions.** This study is useful for local authorities in order to develop sustainable tourism, and for economic agents in obtaining the projected benefits.

Key words: *tourist satisfaction, generational cohorts, Subcarpathians of Oltenia, sustainable tourism, balneal services.*

Introduction

Spa tourism in Romania dates back to the period of Roman conquest, stimulated by the presence of mineral and geothermal springs in a period when numerous baths, especially thermal baths, were used in spa therapy. In the Subcarpathians of Oltenia, excavations at Săcelu revealed parts of the installations of the old Roman baths used for balneal purposes (1).

However, major developments can only be mentioned starting with the second half of the 18th century, when research and facility building have intensified in this field (2,3). This was favoured by the complex geological structure of Romania, which allowed the formation of a large variety of mineral water types, amounting to 2000 springs throughout the country (4).

In this context, a continuous development of spa tourism in Romania followed during the 19th and 20th centuries, with different visions in the capitalist versus the communist eras (1948-1999). The latter

was oriented towards the development of social tourism, which is verified by the boom in mid- and lower-class structures and the emergence of economic mono-functional territorial units (5,6).

Currently, Romania is in a continuous socio-economic transformation, and spa tourism is important in the local economic system due to complex economic influences, manifested both vertically and horizontally (7,8). Moreover, Romania is also facing demographic ageing, a complex process involving socio-economic and cultural effects; therefore, policies related to the aging population should revolve around the concept of health and increasing their life span (9), with spa treatments being just one of the possible solutions. Predictions on demographic ageing at a planetary level are not optimistic, and Romania has also set course on this trajectory. Specialists estimate the senior population older than 65 will rise to 22% of the world's population by the year 2050; they also

foresee a drastic drop in population under the age of 5 (5%) (10). Therefore, society should prepare to facilitate active ageing and a higher healthy life expectancy.

Literature review

Satisfaction is a basic element in assessing how competitive a tourist destination is and a key feedback element for tourist experience. The term "tourist satisfaction" was identified by Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel (11) as a vague concept, insufficiently researched or operationalised at the time. Cho (12) noted that even though there was a continuous increase in research on the satisfaction of tourists, it contained elements of confusion about what tourist satisfaction actually implies, as many people tended to confuse it with service quality, since this represents a global and holistic assessment (13).

Although studies on both service quality and tourist satisfaction have gaps, tourist satisfaction is a very important concept for the (sustainable) management of a destination (14). There are authors who believe that tourist satisfaction is related to a destination's attributes (15) or that it represents the result of the interaction between a tourist's experience and their expectations regarding the destination (11,16,17). Economic studies correlate tourist satisfaction to profitability (18), and Yuksel et al. (19) argue that satisfaction and loyalty are basic elements on which a business is built.

Drawing from Kozak's analyses (20) on the measurement of tourist satisfaction, Pou and Alegre (21), referring to it as customer feedback, state that it can be collected using various methods, one of which is the consumer satisfaction survey. These assessments make it possible to reconsider the continuous improvement of services (22), including better understanding of tourists' needs and desires, which is essential for destination management organisations (23).

On the other hand, Peterson and Wilson (24) argue that there is no measurement of true satisfaction because it is affected by numerous intangible issues from various spheres, such as individual tourist characteristics, multidimensional tourist subsystems (16), similar attractions, hotels, restaurants, and methodological or geographical considerations. The authors conclude that it is impossible to solve all these issues, given that a negative personal

experience can alter other spectacular aspects of the destination. Incidentally, satisfaction depends on many factors, either internal, such as tourist motivation or feelings, or external, such as tourist activities offered by a destination and/or the price-quality balance (25).

To maintain or raise satisfaction, efforts to improve services should be carried out at the same time as improving the infrastructure and technical base of the destination. Fuchs and Weiermair (26) argue that tourism service quality and tourist satisfaction are two complex, multidimensional, dynamic concepts, which are usually influenced by the individual features of customers/tourists, such as gender and age, as well as by the market. The authors conclude that measuring tourist satisfaction is indeed a difficult theoretical and empirical task.

Liljander and Strandvik (27) suggested that perceived service quality can be viewed as an external perspective, a cognitive judgement of a service that doesn't even have to be from personal experience, but it can rely on the knowledge of a company's services or on the way it is advertised. According to Liljander and Strandvik, satisfaction refers to a personal perspective gained through the client's own experiences and within which the result was assessed in terms of value received or in terms of what the customer had to give in order to obtain something.

When viewed as such, tourist satisfaction differs from one individual to another, but also from a generation to another. Age plays a key role in determining consumer behaviour or satisfaction. Dividing the population into groups called generational cohorts was proposed by Inglehart (28). A generational cohort is defined according to birth years and lasts 20-25 years or however long it generally takes for a group to be born, grow up, and have their own children (29). These cohorts share the same attitudes, ideas, values, and beliefs based on their being born during the same period of time and living through joint experiences, with the same social, political, and economic events on a macroeconomic level taking place during their lifetime (29). According to Meredith and Schewe (30), witnessing specific experiences and events will be reflected in their core values related to jobs, money, tolerance, and sexual behaviour. These values, beliefs, expectations, and behaviours remain

constant throughout the lifetime of a generation and create a generational identity (29,28,31,32). When referring to consumers, this can significantly influence shopping patterns and behaviour (33). According to cohort theory (34), using generational cohorts could make it possible to gain additional understanding of consumers, since each cohort is comprised of people who were born in a certain period, and who have similar experiences, values, and priorities that will remain relatively stable throughout their lives (35). UNWTO uses in its reports the terms of consumer generations: Generation X, Y, Z, α (36), terms adopted in tourism research (37,38).

Generation X (GX) refers to people born between 1961 and 1979 (39), it is one of the most highly educated generations in history and is characterized by technological and media savvy, scepticism and pragmatism (40,41).

On a global level, before Generation X, came the Baby Boom/Boomers generation (GBB), which is comprised of people born between 1946 and 1964 (41). Romania did not go through the same demographic boom during this period, but actually later, prompted by the pro-natalist policy enforced during the communist era. However, based on research homogeneity considerations, Romania aligns to this classification as well (39). The GBB cohort members, just as the other generations, have different experiences that influence their values, preferences, and purchase behaviour (42,43,44,45).

The purpose of this study is to assess the satisfaction of Generations X and BB with tourist services provided by the resorts in the Subcarpathians of Oltenia, in accordance with the sustainable development of destinations.

The research objectives are:

1. Outline the balneal characteristics of the study area.
2. Analyse the satisfaction of the two cohorts of tourists regarding access, tourist services (including balneal), and the social climate of the resorts.
3. Identify solutions for raising tourist satisfaction in the context of sustainable development.

Setting scene of the study area

The Subcarpathians of Oltenia, seen as a tourist destination of particular complexity, have a large

number of tourist attractions, a continuously developing infrastructure and various tourist activities, all included in the Northern Oltenia Tourist Region (2). This destination is home to five tourist resorts that show important similarities when it comes to their natural curative factors and the affections they treat.

Călimanești-Căciulata resort has balneal resources such as chlorosodic water, bicarbonate or calcic alkaline water, magnesium sulphur water, and sometimes brom-iodine water. The mineral waters are used in external treatments such as baths or topical applications for disorders of the musculoskeletal system and peripheral nerves, for gynaecological issues, varicose veins and vascular ulcers, and disorders of the upper airways. Internally, they are used to treat the digestive tract and its appendages, the kidneys and urinary tract, and various occupational diseases (46,47,48). Additionally, they are used to heat accommodation units and for recreational purposes (49).

Băile Olănești resort has sulphurous, chlorosodic, iodized, bromine, bicarbonate, calcic, and magnesium waters (1,46). They are used internally for metabolic diseases, kidney disorders, and digestive issues. In external treatments, they are recommended for disorders of the musculoskeletal system and peripheral nerves, skin conditions, and professional diseases (1,47,48).

Băile Govora Resort benefits from chlorosodic and strongly iodized waters, as well as from bicarbonate, sulphurous, bromine, and sodium waters. In addition to mineral waters, spa treatments here use the mud accumulated in the collapsed areas of the old Ocnele Mari salt mines. The resort is recommended for the treatment of rheumatic musculoskeletal disorders, of the peripheral nervous system, the respiratory tract, in otorhinolaryngology and in some nutritional disorders (46,47,48).

Săcelu resort, somewhat geographically isolated from the Vâlcea resort cluster, has natural curative resources such as chlorosodic, iodized, bromine, calcic, sulphurous, and bicarbonate waters. The resort is recommended for the external treatment of musculoskeletal, peripheral nervous system, and gynaecological disorders, and for the internal treatment of diuresis (urinary lithiasis), hypoacidic gastritis, and liver diseases (1,47,48).

The only resort with high concentration chlorosodic mineral water is the town of Ocnele Mari. The second substance used in balneal treatments is the therapeutic mud accumulated in the collapsed areas of the old salt mines. The mineral water in Ocnele Mari is recommended for the treatment of musculoskeletal, peripheral nervous system, and gynaecological disorders (46,47,48).

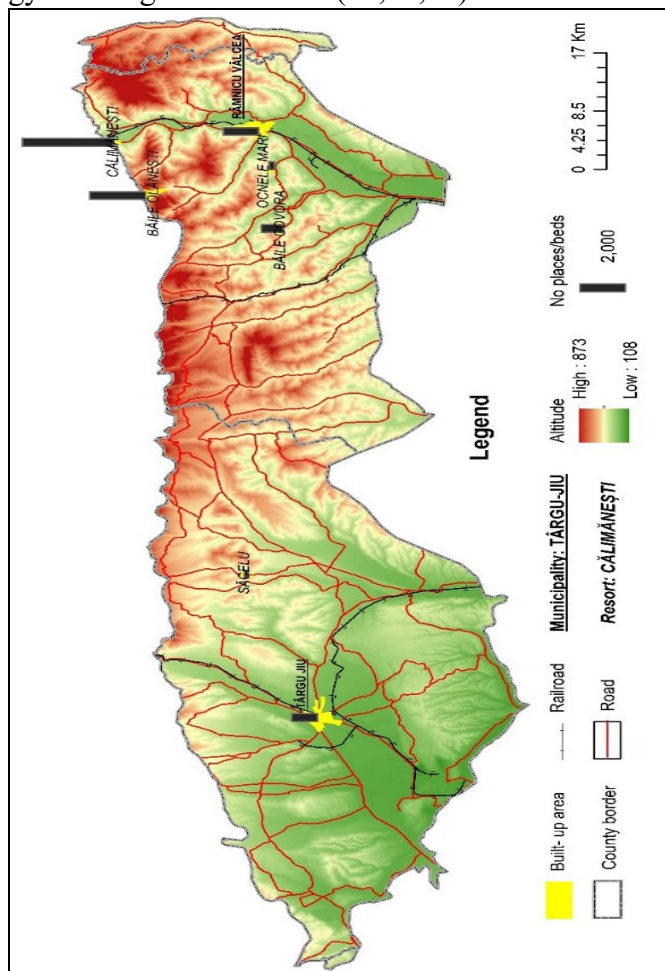


Fig. 1. Subcarpathians of Oltenia: resorts, municipalities, and their tourism capacity

Research methodology and data management

This research is based on a multidimensional approach to the sustainable development of tourism, by guiding the assessment of elements belonging to the environmental, tourist-economic, and social component.

The social component is the central element that interacts with the others and from which derives tourist satisfaction. In order to do this, samples of GX and GBB tourists were analysed to investigate their satisfaction with tourist services. In order to achieve this, satisfaction was investigated by connecting it with the general experience in the

destination, the quality of services received during their stay, and tourist interaction with locals and with the staff of economic agents and local authorities.

This satisfaction assessment was carried out using the investigation method and the semi-structured questionnaire applied face-to-face between July and October 2019; the questions chosen targeted two parts: socio-demographic characteristics and tourist satisfaction measured by access to the destination, and conflict situations. The questionnaire includes questions with multiple binomial answers, questions using the Likert scale (from 1 to 5, where 1 is Very poor, 2 is Poor, 3 is Average, 4 is Good, and 5 is Very good), as well as open questions. The sample consists of 144 responders, equally divided according to gender inside the two generational cohorts, with 59% being part of GX and 41% of GBB. Furthermore, 86% of the respondents come from urban areas and 14% from rural areas. In terms of education, 7.6% have undergone elementary studies (no high school), 35.4% high school studies, 22.2% postgraduate studies, 29.2% university studies, and 5.6% post-university studies. In terms of income, 9% have an income lower than 275€, 31.9% have incomes between 276€ and 500€, 20.8% have incomes between 501€ and 700€, 26.4% have incomes between 701€ and 900€, and 11.8% have an income higher than 900€ (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the sample

Socio-demographic profile		Percent (%)
Gender	Male	50%
	Female	50%
Age	45-64 years	59%
	≥65 years	41%
Education level	Lower secondary school	7.6%
	High school	35.4%
	Post-secondary school	22.2%
	University	29.2%
	Postgraduate	5.6%
Income	≤ 275 €	9%
	276-500 €	31.9%
	501-700 €	20.8%
	701-900 €	26.4%
	≥ 900 €	11.8%
Residence area	Urban	86%
	Rural	14%

Sample size was confirmed by χ^2 test, which showed a large number of statistical correlations with $p < 0.05$ (Table 2).

Table 2. Chi-squared test: correlations among sociodemographic variables and respondents' answers.

Correlations	Value	df	P value
Residence-Leisure	309.846	261	0.020
Residence-Means of transport used	311.749	261	0.017
Residence-Minimum travel distance	418.276	348	0.006
Gender-Complaint to police or authorities	15.689	3	0.001
Gender-Interaction with the staff of economic agents	9.525	4	0.049
Age-Satisfaction with treatment services	14.048	5	0.015
Age-Satisfaction with leisure and recreation services	9.985	3	0.019
Age-Complaint to police or authorities	11.854	3	0.008
Age-Minimum travel distance	9.621	4	0.047
Education- Means of transport used	22.876	12	0.029
Education-Use of local/public transport	13.000	4	0.011
Education-Interaction with locals	26.874	16	0.043
Education-Interaction with local authorities	33.403	16	0.007
Income- Satisfaction with treatment services	32.112	20	0.042
Income - Means of transport used	24.089	12	0.020
Income- Minimum travel distance	36.730	16	0.002

Source: SPSS v 25 output.

Data were processed in SPSS 25 using descriptive statistics, Frequency, and Mean, and the Chi-squared test (χ^2) for statistical and descriptive statistical significance.

GIS was used for the visual representation of the study area, by processing the data referring to access

ways and tourist capacity by resorts and municipalities. The source of the data regarding tourist capacity was the TEMPO-Online database of the INS (50).

Results and discussions

Tourist satisfaction concerning access to and inside the destination

Given that access to the destination is mainly done in two ways – by road and by rail, the means of transport predominantly used to reach the destination is personal car (51.4%), followed by coach with 17.4%, and train with 7.6%. Furthermore, 23.6% of respondents use more than one means of transportation to reach the destination. Comparing the two generations, it is noted that GXs choose their personal car (57% versus 44% for GBB), and BBs prefer the train (12% versus 5% for GX), especially thanks to the facilities offered by railway carriers (Table 3:3.1.).

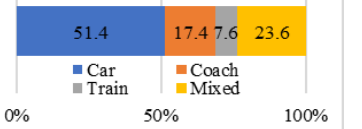
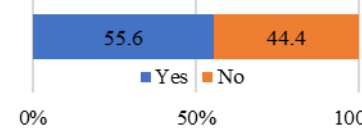
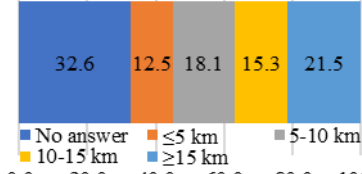
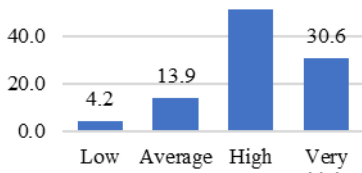
Tourist mobility inside the destination is ensured solely by road transport. More than half of the respondents claimed to use public transport inside the destination (55.6%) and they were divided almost equally between the two generations (Table 3:3.2).

One of the reasons for this is the very profile of the resorts, as facilities here usually recommend walking inside the destination as part of the treatment, combined with getting plenty of rest. Another motivation tied to tourist mobility is the proximity of the resorts to larger towns, as is the case of Călimănești-Căciulata, Băile Olănești, Băile Govora, and Ocele Mari, all of which are close to Râmnicu Vâlcea. The distance tourists travel inside the destination ranges from 5 km or less (12.5%) to between 5-10 km (18.1%), between 10-15 km (15.3%), and to more than 15 km (21.5%). However, it must be stated that 32.6% of tourists did not answer this question. As for how the two generations compare in this aspect, it is noted that GXs travel a distance of more than 15km (30%) inside the destination, while BBs travel 5-10km (24%) (Table 3:3.3).

The overall satisfaction of the generational cohorts with destination accessibility is Good (Mean = 3.56), since 41.7% of respondents give it a value of 4 and 36.8% give it a 3 (Average), but it's not Very good because only 12.5% give it a 5 (Very good) on the

Likert scale (Table 3:3.4.). Comparing the two generations, it is noted that there is a slight difference in the satisfaction for BBG (Mean = 3.49) as opposed to GX (Mean = 3.60).

Table 3. Tourist satisfaction concerning access to and inside the destination

<p>3.1. Means of transport used (What means of transport did you use to get to the destination?)</p>	 <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Transport Mean</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Car</td> <td>51.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Coach</td> <td>17.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Train</td> <td>7.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed</td> <td>23.6</td> </tr> </table>	Transport Mean	Percentage	Car	51.4	Coach	17.4	Train	7.6	Mixed	23.6		
Transport Mean	Percentage												
Car	51.4												
Coach	17.4												
Train	7.6												
Mixed	23.6												
<p>3.2. Do you use local/public transport to travel inside the destination?</p>	 <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>55.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>44.4</td> </tr> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	55.6	No	44.4						
Response	Percentage												
Yes	55.6												
No	44.4												
<p>3.3. If yes, what is your minimum travel distance?</p>	 <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Distance</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> <tr> <td>No answer</td> <td>32.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>≤5 km</td> <td>12.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5-10 km</td> <td>18.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10-15 km</td> <td>15.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>≥15 km</td> <td>21.5</td> </tr> </table>	Distance	Percentage	No answer	32.6	≤5 km	12.5	5-10 km	18.1	10-15 km	15.3	≥15 km	21.5
Distance	Percentage												
No answer	32.6												
≤5 km	12.5												
5-10 km	18.1												
10-15 km	15.3												
≥15 km	21.5												
<p>3.4. Infrastructure. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very poor and 5 is Very good), how do you assess the quality of access to the destination?</p>	 <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Quality</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>4.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average</td> <td>13.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>51.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very high</td> <td>30.6</td> </tr> </table>	Quality	Percentage	Low	4.2	Average	13.9	High	51.4	Very high	30.6		
Quality	Percentage												
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Average	13.9												
High	51.4												
Very high	30.6												
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Total Mean</td> <td>3.56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GX Mean</td> <td>3.60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GBB Mean</td> <td>3.49</td> </tr> </table>	Total Mean	3.56	GX Mean	3.60	GBB Mean	3.49							
Total Mean	3.56												
GX Mean	3.60												
GBB Mean	3.49												

Source: Primary data collected through the questionnaire and processed by the author.

Satisfaction with service quality

To quantify their satisfaction with service quality, tourists were questioned concerning their experience inside the destination and the main services they received here (accommodation, food, treatment and recreation).

The data show that tourists' satisfaction with the experience lived inside the destination is Good (Mean = 4.08), since 51.4% give it a value of 4 (Good), and 30.6% give it a 5 (Very good) (Table

4:4.1.). Differences between the two generations are not so noticeable and consist in the fact that, although both generations believe they are satisfied, the Mean of the GBB responders is slightly higher (4.17) than that of the GX responders (4.02).

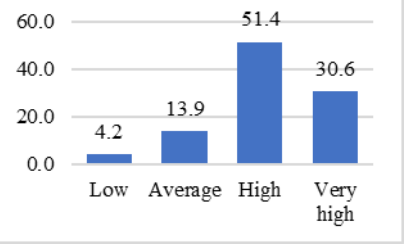
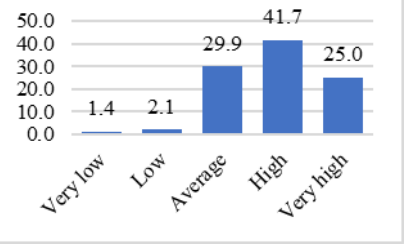
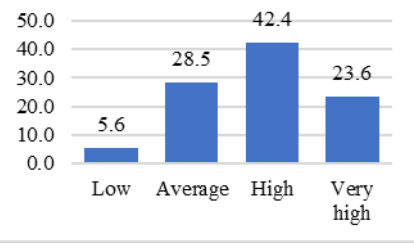
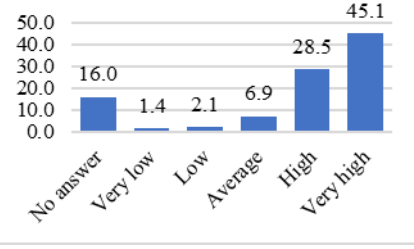
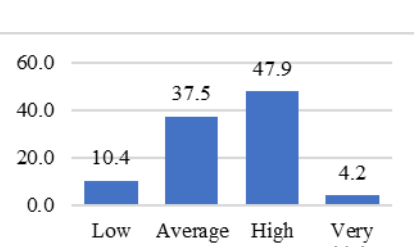
As far as accommodation services are concerned (Table 4:4.2.), data show that tourists' satisfaction is High (41.7%), Average (30%), and Very high (25%). Analysing each of the two generations, it is noted that while most GX respondents fall under the High (48%) and Average (29%) categories, GBB respondents fall under the High category in a slightly higher proportion (32%) than under the Average category (30%), but all in all the Very high category is in the lead (36%). These values can be correlated with the amounts they spend transposed into higher expectations of GXs for accommodation services, which is also confirmed by the average general value of the two generations (Mean GBB = 4, and Mean GX = 3.78).

In terms of satisfaction with public food services (table 4:4.3.), data show that satisfaction is High and Very high for 66% of respondents, which remains valid to a great extent when analysing the two generations separately. This analysis is based on Mean GX = 3.93 and Mean GBB = 3.71 and can be corroborated with the dietary requirements that the older GBB members are advised to follow for a better outcome of their treatments.

Viewed from the perspective of treatment services (Table 4:4.4.), data show that satisfaction is High and Very high for approximately 74% of tourists. As for the two generational cohorts, GBB's satisfaction is High (value 4) and Very high (value 5) in proportion of 86%, as opposed to only 65% of the GX. This is explained by the fact that within the GX sample there are members who have not benefited from treatment services or have benefited to a lesser extent, visibly shown by the Mean values of each generations, where Mean GX = 3.29 and Mean GBB = 4.19.

Tourists' satisfaction with the leisure and recreation services in the destination is Average (37.5%) and High (47.9%) (Table 4:4.5.). There is only one significant difference between the two generations, i.e. GBB members (Mean = 3.56) are more satisfied than GX members (Mean = 3.36). This can be correlated with the fact that paying for leisure and recreation activities is more specific to GX rather than to GBB given the latter's lower revenues.

Table 4. Tourist satisfaction with the quality of tourist and balneal services.

<p>4.1. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very low and 5 is Very high), how satisfied are you with your experience in the destination?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Mean</td><td>4.08</td></tr> <tr><td>GX Mean</td><td>4.02</td></tr> <tr><td>GBB Mean</td><td>4.17</td></tr> </table>	Total Mean	4.08	GX Mean	4.02	GBB Mean	4.17	 <table border="1"> <tr><th>Satisfaction Level</th><th>Percentage</th></tr> <tr><td>Low</td><td>4.2</td></tr> <tr><td>Average</td><td>13.9</td></tr> <tr><td>High</td><td>51.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Very high</td><td>30.6</td></tr> </table>	Satisfaction Level	Percentage	Low	4.2	Average	13.9	High	51.4	Very high	30.6				
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Satisfaction Level	Percentage																				
Low	4.2																				
Average	13.9																				
High	51.4																				
Very high	30.6																				
<p>4.2. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very low and 5 is Very high), how satisfied are you with accommodation services?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Mean</td><td>3.87</td></tr> <tr><td>GX Mean</td><td>3.78</td></tr> <tr><td>GBB Mean</td><td>4.00</td></tr> </table>	Total Mean	3.87	GX Mean	3.78	GBB Mean	4.00	 <table border="1"> <tr><th>Satisfaction Level</th><th>Percentage</th></tr> <tr><td>Very low</td><td>1.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Low</td><td>2.1</td></tr> <tr><td>Average</td><td>29.9</td></tr> <tr><td>High</td><td>41.7</td></tr> <tr><td>Very high</td><td>25.0</td></tr> </table>	Satisfaction Level	Percentage	Very low	1.4	Low	2.1	Average	29.9	High	41.7	Very high	25.0		
Total Mean	3.87																				
GX Mean	3.78																				
GBB Mean	4.00																				
Satisfaction Level	Percentage																				
Very low	1.4																				
Low	2.1																				
Average	29.9																				
High	41.7																				
Very high	25.0																				
<p>4.3. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very low and 5 is Very high), how satisfied are you with public food services?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Mean</td><td>3.84</td></tr> <tr><td>GX Mean</td><td>3.93</td></tr> <tr><td>GBB Mean</td><td>3.71</td></tr> </table>	Total Mean	3.84	GX Mean	3.93	GBB Mean	3.71	 <table border="1"> <tr><th>Satisfaction Level</th><th>Percentage</th></tr> <tr><td>Low</td><td>5.6</td></tr> <tr><td>Average</td><td>28.5</td></tr> <tr><td>High</td><td>42.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Very high</td><td>23.6</td></tr> </table>	Satisfaction Level	Percentage	Low	5.6	Average	28.5	High	42.4	Very high	23.6				
Total Mean	3.84																				
GX Mean	3.93																				
GBB Mean	3.71																				
Satisfaction Level	Percentage																				
Low	5.6																				
Average	28.5																				
High	42.4																				
Very high	23.6																				
<p>4.4. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very low and 5 is Very high), how satisfied are you with treatment services?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Mean</td><td>3.66</td></tr> <tr><td>GX Mean</td><td>3.29</td></tr> <tr><td>GBB Mean</td><td>4.19</td></tr> </table>	Total Mean	3.66	GX Mean	3.29	GBB Mean	4.19	 <table border="1"> <tr><th>Satisfaction Level</th><th>Percentage</th></tr> <tr><td>No answer</td><td>16.0</td></tr> <tr><td>Very low</td><td>1.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Low</td><td>2.1</td></tr> <tr><td>Average</td><td>6.9</td></tr> <tr><td>High</td><td>28.5</td></tr> <tr><td>Very high</td><td>45.1</td></tr> </table>	Satisfaction Level	Percentage	No answer	16.0	Very low	1.4	Low	2.1	Average	6.9	High	28.5	Very high	45.1
Total Mean	3.66																				
GX Mean	3.29																				
GBB Mean	4.19																				
Satisfaction Level	Percentage																				
No answer	16.0																				
Very low	1.4																				
Low	2.1																				
Average	6.9																				
High	28.5																				
Very high	45.1																				
<p>4.5. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very low and 5 is Very high), how satisfied are you with leisure and recreational services?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Mean</td><td>3.46</td></tr> <tr><td>GX Mean</td><td>3.36</td></tr> <tr><td>GBB Mean</td><td>3.56</td></tr> </table>	Total Mean	3.46	GX Mean	3.36	GBB Mean	3.56	 <table border="1"> <tr><th>Satisfaction Level</th><th>Percentage</th></tr> <tr><td>Low</td><td>10.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Average</td><td>37.5</td></tr> <tr><td>High</td><td>47.9</td></tr> <tr><td>Very high</td><td>4.2</td></tr> </table>	Satisfaction Level	Percentage	Low	10.4	Average	37.5	High	47.9	Very high	4.2				
Total Mean	3.46																				
GX Mean	3.36																				
GBB Mean	3.56																				
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Average	37.5																				
High	47.9																				
Very high	4.2																				

Source: Primary data collected through the questionnaire and processed by the author.

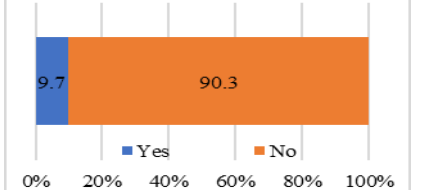
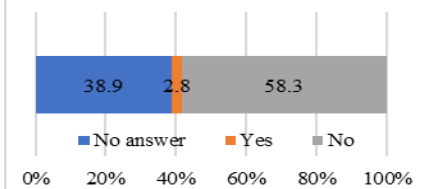
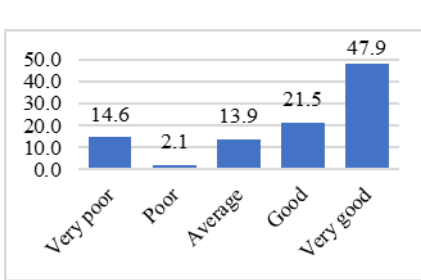
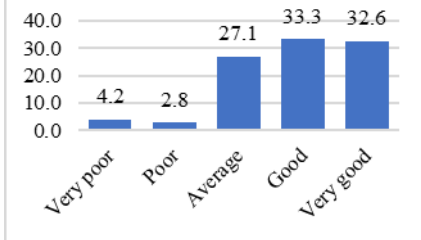
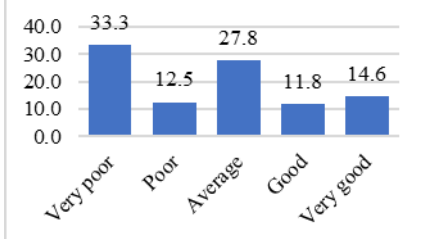
Satisfaction with local community interaction

Tourist satisfaction is also influenced by the social atmosphere of the destinations. Therefore, the possibility of a conflicting situation emerging can have a defining role in tourist satisfaction, which, in turn, may or may not lead to a follow-up visit. This is why conflict situations are an important indicator to consider when it comes to the sustainable development of a tourist destination, and therefore they must be carefully identified in order to find a solution. In this study, 9.7% of respondents (Table 5:5.1.) had conflict situations during their stay, and more exactly 15% of the GBB tourists and 6% of the GX tourists. Of these, only 2.8% (0% GX and 7% GBB) filed a report with the police or other authorities in a position to solve conflicts or problems (Table 5:5.2.). In terms of tourists' interaction with the locals (Table 5:5.3.), 48% of tourists believe that their interaction was Very good (value 5), with unnoticeable differences between the two generations (48% for GX and 47% for GBB).

In order to detect the main problems leading to tourist dissatisfaction, tourists were questioned concerning the destination's stakeholders (economic agents, residents, and local authorities). As far as economic agents are concerned, data show that approximately two thirds (66%) of responders consider that interaction with the staff of local economic agents is Good or Very good, while about 7% consider it to be Poor or Very poor (Table 5:5.4.). As for analysing each generation, it is observed that the Mean is 3.87 for both, with very slight variations between them. 37% of GX respondents believe that the interaction is rather Good (value 4), and 34% of GBB respondent believe that the interaction is Average (value 3).

Concerning tourists' interaction with local authorities (Table 5:5.5.), data show that 33.3% of respondents assign value 1 (Very poor), and 27.8% assign value 3 (Average), these characteristics also defining each generation. There are no significant differences between generations in terms of Mean either (GX Mean = 2.58 and GBB Mean = 2.68) because most of the time tourists did not come into direct contact with local authorities, although they did feel that authorities do not develop their subordinate areas in the right directions.

Table 5. Tourist satisfaction with local community interaction. Calculated in SPSS v25 and Microsoft Excel 2016.

<p>5.1. Did you experience any conflict situation during your stay in the destination?</p>	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>9.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>90.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	9.7	No	90.3												
Response	Percentage																		
Yes	9.7																		
No	90.3																		
<p>5.2. If yes, did you file a complaint with the police or the authorities?</p>	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No answer</td> <td>38.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>2.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>58.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	No answer	38.9	Yes	2.8	No	58.3										
Response	Percentage																		
No answer	38.9																		
Yes	2.8																		
No	58.3																		
<p>5.3. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very poor and 5 is Very good), how do you assess your interaction with the locals?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="108 907 325 1066"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Mean</td> <td>3.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GX Mean</td> <td>3.92</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GBB Mean</td> <td>3.78</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total Mean	3.86	GX Mean	3.92	GBB Mean	3.78	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Very poor</td> <td>14.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>2.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average</td> <td>13.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>21.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very good</td> <td>47.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Very poor	14.6	Poor	2.1	Average	13.9	Good	21.5	Very good	47.9
Total Mean	3.86																		
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Very good	47.9																		
<p>5.4. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very poor and 5 is Very good), how do you assess your interaction with the staff of local economic agents?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="108 1310 325 1464"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Mean</td> <td>3.87</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GX Mean</td> <td>3.88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GBB Mean</td> <td>3.86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total Mean	3.87	GX Mean	3.88	GBB Mean	3.86	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Very poor</td> <td>4.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>2.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average</td> <td>27.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>33.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very good</td> <td>32.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Very poor	4.2	Poor	2.8	Average	27.1	Good	33.3	Very good	32.6
Total Mean	3.87																		
GX Mean	3.88																		
GBB Mean	3.86																		
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Good	33.3																		
Very good	32.6																		
<p>5.5. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very poor and 5 is Very good), how do you assess your interaction with the local authorities?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="108 1684 325 1839"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Mean</td> <td>2.62</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GX Mean</td> <td>2.58</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GBB Mean</td> <td>2.68</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total Mean	2.62	GX Mean	2.58	GBB Mean	2.68	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Very poor</td> <td>33.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>12.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average</td> <td>27.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>11.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very good</td> <td>14.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Very poor	33.3	Poor	12.5	Average	27.8	Good	11.8	Very good	14.6
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Very good	14.6																		

Source: Primary data collected through the questionnaire and processed by the author.

Conclusions

The area has a wide tourist offer generated by five resorts with balneal resources that especially attract tourists from GX and GBB.

The location of this cluster of resorts is close to the main tourist generating areas of Romania, but access to the destination is primarily by road and secondly by rail. This draws attention to the development of a better transport management such as the modernisation of roads and railways, investments in public transport, etc.

Access to the resorts is considered good, but with gaps in investments towards modernization. There is a need for bypass routes (which partially exist to the East of Vâlcea and Călimănești Căciulata) because the main transport axes go through the centre of each resort.

Tourist services are good, which results in a predominantly high and average satisfaction, but the study shows a demand to enhance both the entertainment and the treatment offer; this is especially true for GX tourists who do not entirely find the services to satisfy their requirements at maximum level. It has also been observed that public food services should specialize on consumer categories and corroborate their offer with the various therapeutic diets recommended by the local spas and treatment centres.

Although accommodation services have received the highest value in the evaluation, close to the Good level, investments and programs/offers are needed to increase the satisfaction at maximum level. Therefore, the accommodation structures presently classified at 2-3 stars could be upgraded to 3-4 stars since the revenues have increased, but so have the tourists' demands and their culture.

The same level of satisfaction is observed in relation to the locals, the authorities, and especially the hotel staff. Development in the local community would benefit all the stakeholders, and a number of indicators would be achieved regarding the sustainable development of tourism destinations. On the one hand, the number of visitors and repeat visits would increase, and the destination would become more competitive; on the other hand, this would help raise the awareness and involvement of the local community in the tourist market. This is why we recommend creating a system for information to flow inside the local community concerning its

involvement in the life of the tourist destination; this can be achieved through the media and through workshops and trainings for tourism staff in consensus with the demands of sustainable development.

Acknowledgement: This paper derives from the research for my doctoral thesis, financed by the University of Bucharest. The author thanks the thesis coordinator (Professor Elena Matei) for her attentive guidance in writing this article.

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