

PARTICIPANTS' MOTIVATION AND PERCEPTION ON EVENTS

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Abstract:

Since the last half of the twentieth century, events industry came into shape, marking the increasing role of events in various aspects of life worldwide. Nowadays it can be witnessed a growing number of events organised more frequently both in urban and rural settings, as well as an increase in their size.

Romania is following the same direction concerning the events.

Our paper aims to identify and analyse the attitudes and the perceptions of Romanians regarding the events organised in our country.

A descriptive research through interview based on a short questionnaire was conducted during the 2016 to present.

The research reveals that almost 65% of the respondents are interested and very interested in events. The overall impression of more than 80 percentages of the Romanians regarding the event market is good and very good. The results indicated a positive satisfaction level of more than 71% of the respondents.

Key words: events, attitudes, perceptions, motivations, demographic characteristics of events' participants

JEL classification: M31, L82, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

Events are an essential part of our culture, as never before in history (Tomuş, 2012). Last years witnessed a tremendous growth in the number and the diversity of events worldwide (Getz, 2008; Lee and Beeler, 2009, Thrane, 2002), mainly due to the positive impact on their host community development and also due to the fact that tourists are more and more attracted by this type of activities (Gursoy et al., 2004; Taylor and Shanka, 2002; Thrane, 2002).

Governments support the events considered in their strategies of economic development, of building up nations and of promoting certain touristic destinations. Many corporations and companies use events for promotion purposes. The enthusiasm of the different communities and individuals for their passions increases the area of the events, which can embrace whatever possible theme (Tomuş, 2012) such as thematic festivals, political events, cultural activities, sport events, religious meetings, etc. These types of events are organized at international level (Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, World Expo), as well as at national level (Oktoberfest from Munich, The Festival of Carpenters and Fire from Valencia, The Ice Festival from Harbin (China), The "George Enescu" Festival from Bucharest, Romania) (Popescu and Corboş, 2012).

Many tourist destinations include in their marketing plans events due to their capacity of attracting tourists and their contribution to community development, urban renewal, and preservation of cultural and national identities (Getz, 2008).

Mair and Whitford (2013), in an extensive review of research on the topic of events identified the main streams as follows:

- economic studies: forecasting, assessing and evaluating economic impact;
- socio-cultural studies: evaluating social development, structure of a community, social capital, commercialisation of culture, social renewal, group and place identity, urban regeneration;
- motivations, perceptions and attitudes of visitors and residents;
- environmental studies focusing on sustainability and greening of events, e.g. management processes, environmentally friendly practices, reducing waste ecological footprint;
- political studies: researching power and politics relationships between governments, event organisers and communities, governance;
- management studies: destination management, event management, stakeholders, marketing, corporate social responsibility and competitive forces.

Events bring for the communities and host destinations advantages as well as disadvantages (Woo et al., 2011). Among the positive aspects events bring previous literature mentions the revenues generated for the organising cities, the infrastructure improvement (Smith, 2005). Also they build social cohesion in the community and create a positive image in the minds of tourists, can increase local tourism demand and represent a strategy for attracting tourists in off-peak seasons (Chwe, 1998; Formica and Uysal, 1998, Yolal, Cetinel and Uysal, 2009, Van Der Wagen and Carlos, 2005). Events hold an important role in revealing and honouring of cultural traditions (Crompton and McKay, 1997), being also extremely important for the preservation and promotion of the cultural identity of nations (Mahika, Rădulescu and Aluculesei, 2015). Also events are perceived as alternative forms of tourism contributing with preservation of the natural and cultural fragile environment to the sustainable development (Getz, 1990; Backman, Backman, Uysal, Sunshine, 1995 in Mahika, Rădulescu and Aluculesei, 2015).

On the negative side, events bring negative impacts at environmental, social and cultural levels through community displacement, crime, crowding and commodification of culture (Barker, Page, and Meyer, 2002; Jurowski, Uysal and Williams, 1997; Presbury and Edwards, 2005).

Thus, it's highly important, when organizing events to consider all the aspects: economic, social, cultural, as well as their future impact on that certain area, after they are over (Popescu and Corboş, 2012).

In order to capitalize on the positive effects of events, the event managers need to ensure a high level of satisfaction for participants as satisfied participants will promote the event among family members and acquaintances, which can lead to increased number of visitors, an increase in tourism revenue to the community, further contributing to increased employment and modern infrastructure (Darnell and Johnson, 2001). In this context understanding the motivations behind the participation in events, knowing the factors that provide their satisfaction and the determinants of the intention to revisit and recommend it and also the development of the profile of attendees can guide marketing and managerial decision making for organising a successful event (Backman et al., 1995; Chancellor and Cole, 2008; Lee, Lee, and Wicks, 2004).

Crompton and McKay (1997) argue that there is a need to understand the motivational factors of attending events as it is the fundament of a personalized offer tailored according to their needs. This is the basis of customers' loyalty for festivals organized annually. Identifying and prioritizing the motivations represent a key element in understanding the decisional process of the customers.

In Romania the events industry is in a continuous development and transformation, the events' organizers are inspired by the events organized abroad this leading to a wide diversity of events themes (Christmas or Ester traditions, popular traditions from different regions, music, film or art, traditional cuisine, special themes) which has led to the attraction of a growing number of Romanian and foreign tourists (Popescu and Corboş, 2012).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the present study an exploratory and descriptive research was performed. A face to face interview was conducted for collecting the data from Romanians. A short questionnaire was randomly implemented with the help of students during the 2016 until present. For the present study a number of 1363 valid questionnaires were analysed. Two types of data were collected: basic and classification data. As basic data were considered different aspects such as preferred events to attend, overall impression on Romania events market, information sources, choosing criteria for participation, the level of satisfaction regarding events, motivations to participate etc. To measure the motivation to attend an event it was used an adapted version of Uysal et al (1993) motivation scale which has been tested and confirmed by previous studies (Schneider and Backman, 1996; Formica and Uysal, 1998; Gursoy et al., 2004; Yolal et al. 2009; Yolal et al. 2015).

The questionnaire also includes demographic variables: age, gender, education level, occupation, monthly income and marital status.

The main objective of this paper is to identify and analyse the Romanians' attitudes and perceptions on domestic event market. Our research results provide insight to the motivation and satisfaction of participants in events that is relevant for outlining the attendee's profile.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Figure 1 presents the level of interest regarding events in Romania. It can be notice that almost two-thirds of the respondents (63.98%) are interested and very interested in participating to events.

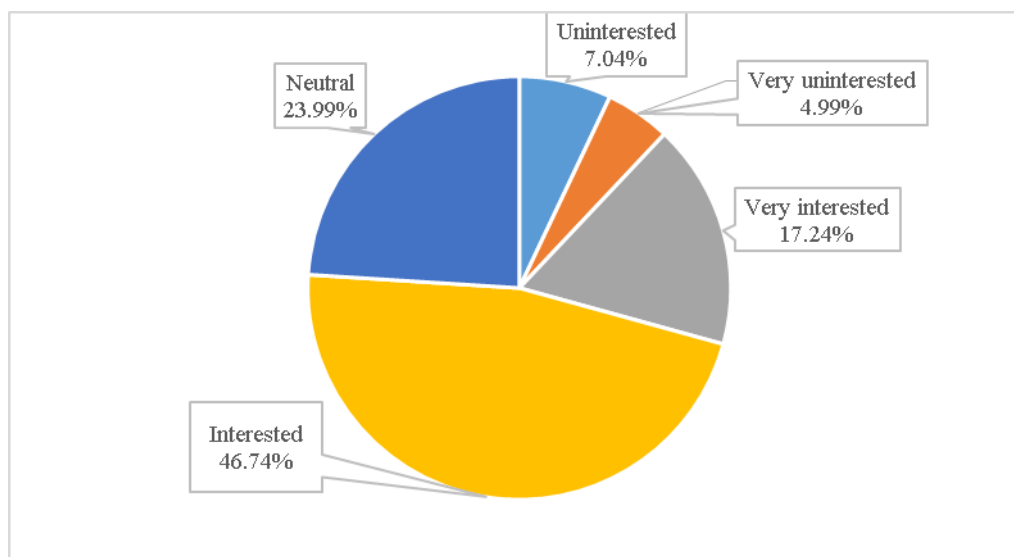


Figure 1: Interest concerning the Romanian events market

Source: own calculation

The study revealed (figure 2) that the most preferred events are concerts, followed by entertainment events and cultural ones. Concerts represent the first preference being mentioned by half of the respondents.

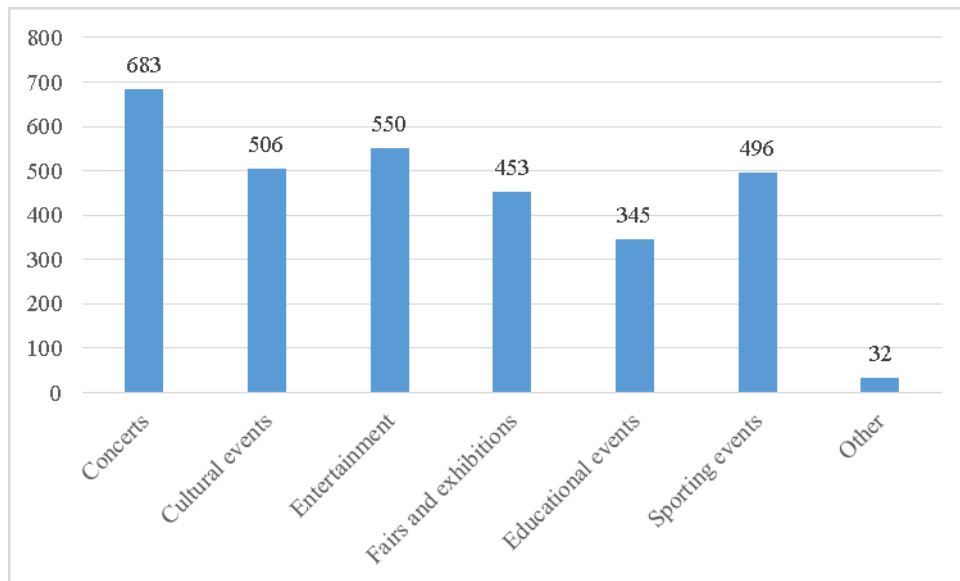


Figure 2: Preferred events
Source: own calculation

In Figure 3 is represented the general impression on events in Romania. A scale from very poor to very good without neutral point was used to measure the respondents’ attitude concerning the domestic events market. Around 80% of the Romanians have a good and very good impression on national market.

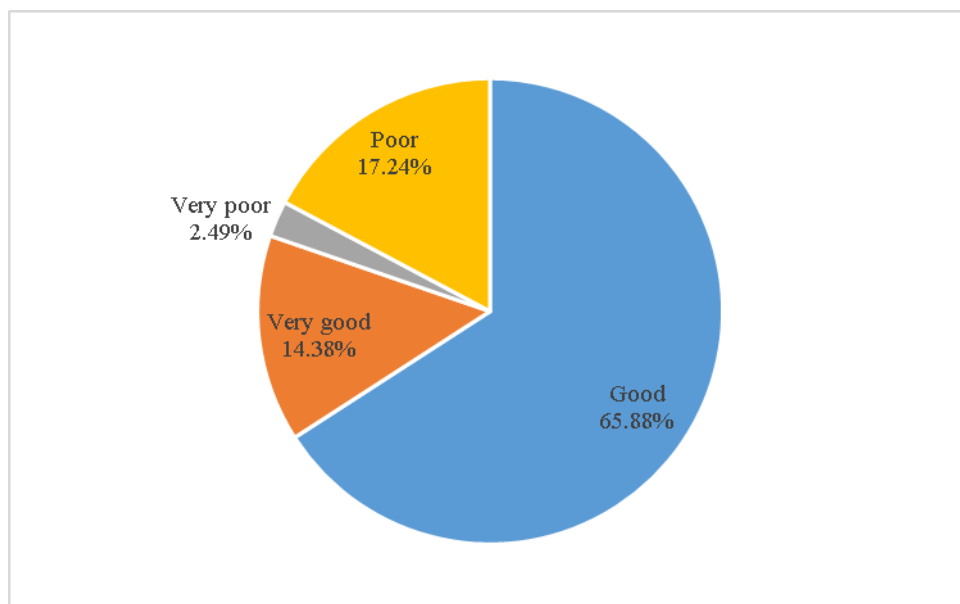


Figure 3: Overall impression on Romanian events market
Source: own calculation

The most frequent information source for events is social media/ blogs mentioned by almost 60% of the sample, followed by friends and relatives. The less used source of information (8.5%) about events is papers: newspapers, magazines, journals etc. (figure 4).

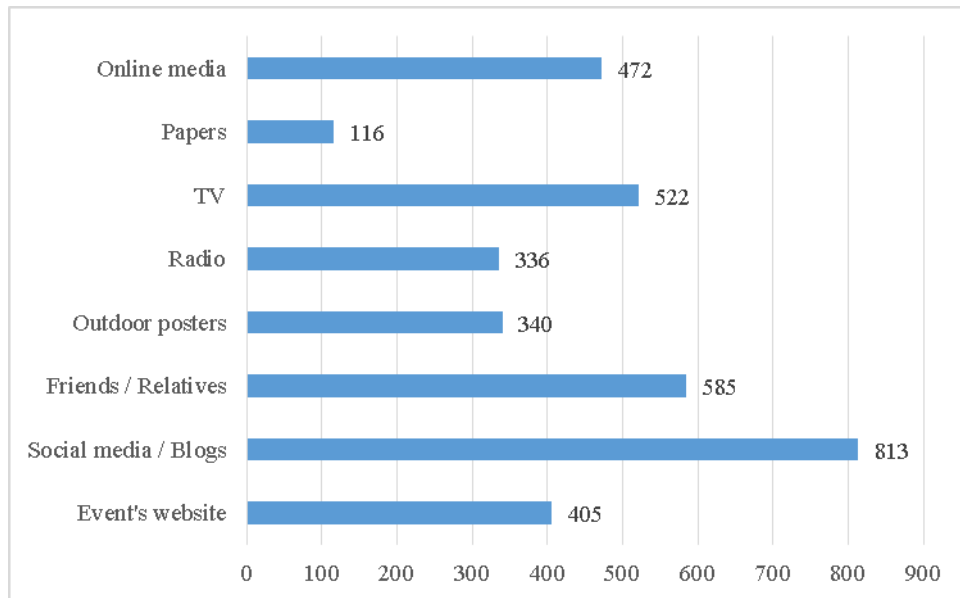


Figure 4: Information sources for events
Source: own calculation

Regarding the most favourable period to attend an event respondents prefer spring and summer between April to September (figure 5). This period was mentioned by a huge percentage of the questioned people - 83.78%.

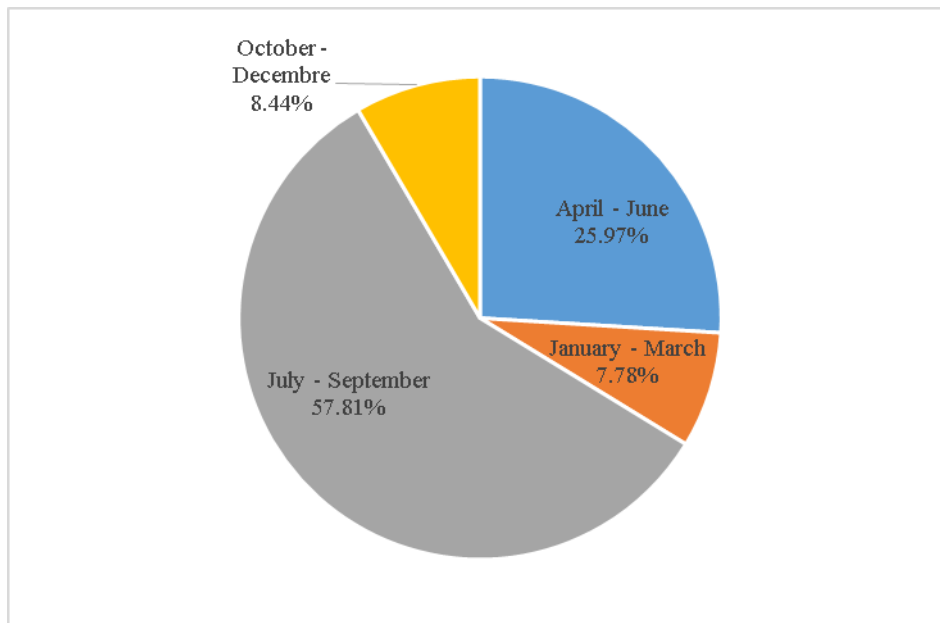


Figure 5: Favorable period for attending events
Source: own calculation

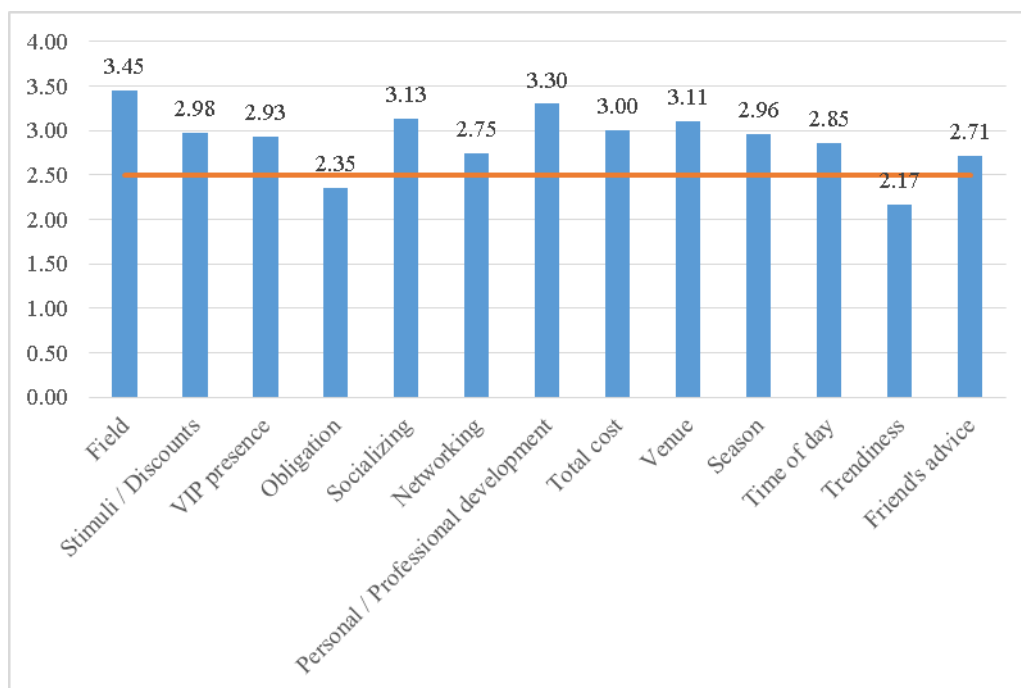
Table 1 presents the importance of factors influencing event participation decision. Thirteen chosen criteria were selected for the study to identify how a participant selects an event to attend. A scale was used – from 1 – very unimportant to 4 – very important - to hierarchy them. Field of event is considered the most important criterion (3.45), followed by personal / professional development (3.30) and socialization (3.13).

Table 1: Choosing criteria for events' participation

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important	Average
Field	10	71	575	707	3.45
Stimuli / Discounts	55	300	628	380	2.98
VIP presence	96	299	566	402	2.93
Obligation	241	543	437	142	2.35
Socializing	39	178	716	430	3.13
Networking	103	385	629	246	2.75
Personal / Professional development	37	137	569	620	3.30
Total cost	62	257	664	380	3.00
Venue	37	221	662	443	3.11
Season	66	306	606	385	2.96
Time of day	83	366	581	333	2.85
Trendiness	370	540	304	149	2.17
Friend's advice	118	364	675	206	2.71

Source: own calculation

Five of the criteria received evaluations above 3 points so are considered important and very important by the participants (figure 6). The research revealed that excluding obligation and trendiness which are under the average but closer to this value (2.35 and 2.17 compared with 2.5) all the rest eleven criteria must be considered when the main purpose and element of the marketing campaign of an event is set.

**Figure 6: Factors influencing event participation decision**

Source: own calculation

Considering the number of attended events per year 45.12% of the sample is present to less than five events per year. This number of events can be considered a small one taking into consideration the possible event type to participate. In plus, almost 80% of the population are present to less than ten events per year, meaning less than one per month (figure 7).

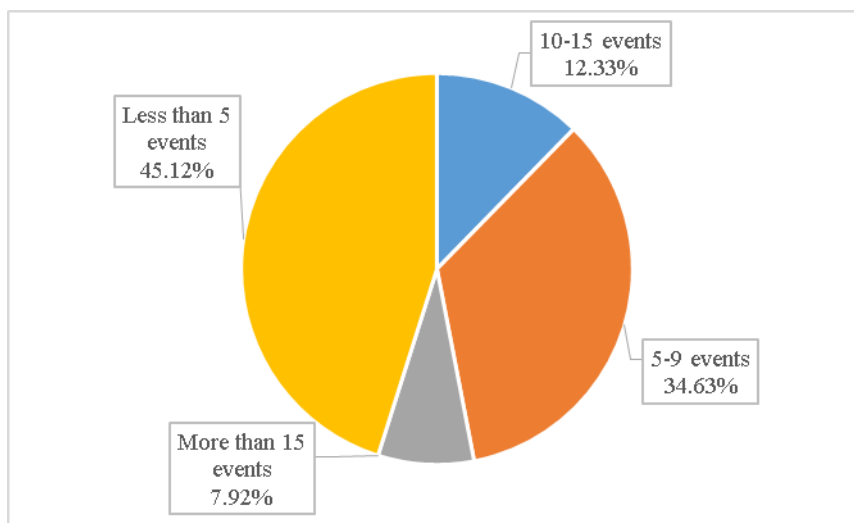


Figure 7: Number of attended events per year

Source: own calculation

In table 2 are presented the main reasons for attending an event. It can be noticed that the most important reason for participating is to experience new and different things and less important is enjoying the event crowds.

Table 2: Motives of events' attendance

No.	Motives	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Indifferent	Important	Very important	Average
1	To detach from daily responsibilities	45	57	238	566	457	3.98
2	To experience new and different things	11	36	129	648	539	4.22
3	To be with people that have the same interest	26	75	310	609	343	3.86
4	To live the event's experience	17	52	199	676	419	4.05
5	Because it is stimulating and interesting	21	50	214	698	380	4.00
6	To observe the other people present at the event	262	293	416	252	140	2.79
7	For the chance of spending time with family	41	100	259	554	409	3.87
8	To spend time with friends	29	53	185	702	394	4.01
9	To be with people that have fun	38	109	341	590	285	3.72
10	Because events are unique	49	116	330	583	285	3.69
11	Because I like the crowds made by such events	468	272	337	194	92	2.39

Source: own calculation

Looking to the weighted average for each participating reasons the research reveals that four out of eleven factors are located between important and very important reasons for attending an event. Five motives are considered between indifferent and important. Only two factors (because I

like the crowds made by such events and to observe the other people present at the event) are located between indifferent and unimportant.

The research shows that the average maximum amount willing to spend for an event is around 420 lei representing almost 100 euro.

Through an open-ended question the participants were asked to mention the most important events attended in the past 12 months. The most nominated were Untold festival, City Days and Transilvania International Film Festival.

Figure 8 shows that around 70% of the Romanians are satisfied and very satisfied with the events organised on domestic market. Only less than 10% are unsatisfied and very unsatisfied with events offer.

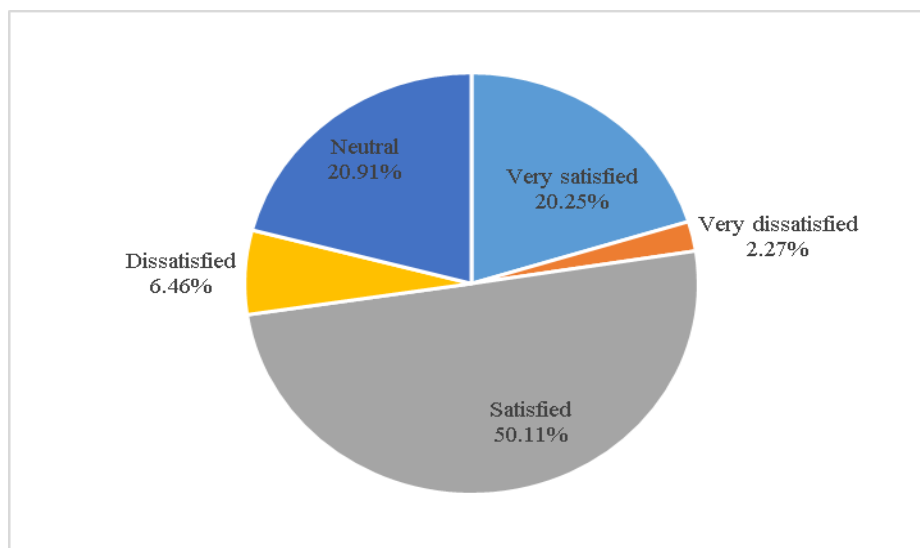


Figure 8: Satisfaction concerning domestic events' market

Source: own calculation

Table 3 presents the profile of the respondents, considering demographic characteristics.

Table 3: Profile of the participants to Romanian events market

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age		
<19	67	4.92%
19-24	620	45.49%
25-30	299	21.94%
31-40	177	12.99%
41-50	121	8.88%
>50	79	5.80%
Gender		
Female	744	54.59%
Male	619	45.41%
Education		
Basic studies	65	4.77%
High school	488	35.80%
Post-secondary	111	8.14%
University studies	602	44.17%
Postuniversity studies	97	7.12%
Income		
<1000	381	27.95%
1000-2000	503	36.90%
2000-3000	296	21.72%

3000-4000	84	6.16%
> 4000	99	7.26%
Marital status		
Single	598	43.87%
In a relationship without children	447	32.80%
In a relationship having children	318	23.33%

Source: own calculation

Concerning the age of the respondents, the majority of them (45%) are between 19-24 years old. The smallest percentage (5.8%) is represented by seniors (up to 50 years old). In correlation with the main common participant to the events, the segment under 30 years old, including scholars and students are over 70%. Almost 55% of the respondents are female and 45% are male. Analysing the level of education, the majority (51%) has university and post university studies. It should be considered also the high school because the last graduated level for students is this one. The study reveals that the vast majority of the participants are educated. In respect with the income, but correlated with the age, the majority (65%) has under average medium wage in Romania. Looking at the marital status, and considering the ages of the majority, around 44% are single. Useful information for identifying the participant's profile is that 23% of the respondents have children.

4. CONSLUSIONS

The present research continues the endeavour of understanding the participants' perception, motivation and overall satisfaction on the events market from Romania and to use this knowledge in outlining and understanding the attendee's profile.

The study reveals the following participant's profile. Concerning demographics, the common participant in the events is under 30 years old, including scholars and students, bought female and male, having university studies and being single. The participant's income is under the average medium wage in Romania. The overall impression on domestic events market is good and very good. The most preferred events to attend are concerts, entertainment events and cultural ones. This information is sustained by the three events mentioned by respondents: Untold, City Days and TIFF, being a concert, an entertainment and respectively, a cultural event. Regarding the information source for events, the most frequent used is social media/ blogs, followed by friends and relatives. Papers like newspapers, magazines, journals etc. are the less used sources of information about events being an inefficient instrument for promotion. The most favourable period to attend an event respondents prefer spring and summer between April and September. Concerning criteria for choosing events, the field of the event is considered the most important, followed by personal/ professional development and socialization. The Romanian consumer participates in less than 10 events per year. This number can be considered a small one taking into consideration the numerous domestic events organized throughout the year. The analysis of the motivations on attending events identified the four most important factors: experiencing new and different things, living the event's experience, spending time with friends and also because events are stimulating and interesting. Almost 100 euro represents the average amount participants are willing to spend for an event. The majority of the Romanians are being satisfied and very satisfied with the domestic events' market.

The findings of this study offer practical implications and recommendations for events' organizers and local authorities that can improve the planning process of future events and the designing of specific marketing programs to attract participants.

It also provides insight on the profile of the Romanian consumer of events which constitutes valuable information for enhancing the service levels and the effectiveness of the promotional mix leading to a better satisfaction of the participants.

As future directions of research on events industry, that will bring positive contribution, longitudinal studies can be considered. They should focus on analysing demographic, behavioural,

geographical and psychographic differences among participants, target segments and investigating their needs and expectations.

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