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Article

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Amfiteatru Economic Journal

Provided in Cooperation with:

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Suggested Citation: Cosma, Smaranda; Zerva, Konstantina; Bota, Marius; Fleşeriu, Cristina (2018) :
A study on the Romanians profile among leisure activities, Amfiteatru Economic Journal, ISSN
2247-9104, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Vol. 20, Iss. Special Issue No.
12, pp. 920-934,
<https://doi.org/10.24818/EA/2018/S12/920>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/283560>

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A STUDY ON THE ROMANIANS' PROFILE AMONG LEISURE ACTIVITIES

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Please cite this article as:

Cosma, S., Zerva, K., Bota, M. and Fleşeriu, C., 2018. A Study On the Romanians' Profile Among Leisure Activities. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 20(Special no. 12), pp.920-934.

DOI: 10.24818/EA/2018/S12/920

Article History

Received: 17 August 2018

Revised: 14 September 2018

Accepted: 9 October 2018

Abstract

Nowadays, there is an increased concern about what leisure is and how people spend their leisure time. When we are talking about leisure, all of us have “images” in our minds; different from person to person. These are images of freedom out of constraints and obligations.

The purpose of the research is to identify and describe the leisure activities among the Romanians and the influence of respondents' profile in respect with their preferences. As a research method, the descriptive research based on investigation was used. For data collection, an interview based on a short questionnaire was implemented for several months during the year of 2015 and 2016.

The research reveals that in average the respondents spent 4,6 hours engaged in leisure activities in a working day and 9,3 hours in a free day. In a working day, the most frequent leisure activity is surfing on the internet (more than 60% of the respondents) and the rarest is visiting tourist attractions or destinations (almost 39%). In a free day, ones again, surfing on the internet (61% respondents) is the most frequent leisure activity and the rarest one is participating at cultural activities like visits at the museum, art galleries etc. (36.53%). The study shows that the respondents prefer non-home-based leisure activities and also active ones.

Keywords: leisure activities, free time, home-based activities, non-home-based activities, working day, free day.

JEL Classification: L83, M31.

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Introduction

On a general level, leisure has been defined as a set of voluntary non-work activities (Hills and Argyle, 1998), where its basic distinction as an activity is its opposite relation to paid employment. Nonetheless, this definition is too simplistic in its effort to capture the multi-faceted identity of non-work related activities, considering the increasing market offer for physical and spiritual individual benefits. Moving further on, leisure has been broadly approached in a dual way: as leisure time and as leisure experiences, keeping their reverse connection with work (Haworth and Veal, 2004; Parr and Lashua, 2004; Lewis, 2003). On the other hand, leisure activities and time have been also dually studied: as objective and subjective phenomenon (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). The objective approach sees leisure as a set of activities done in a specific place, at a specific time, measured through time-budgets or activity inventories. The main problem here is that participants as well as researchers accepted the same sets of activities as leisure. As a subjective phenomenon, leisure is studied as a mental experience, where the satisfaction or meanings of experiencing leisure activities depends on individual perceptions.

Analysing the literature review, it was observed that free time has been studied by researchers from different fields: psychology, sociology, economy, sport, medicine. So, defining free time remains a difficult, perfectible problem, a relative concept that makes sense just after setting a reference system.

Based on the demographic profile of a person and the significant difference of their program on a working day and a free one, this paper aims to present, from an economic perspective, the different ways of spending free time in Romania.

1. Review of the scientific literature

Leisure has been associated with residual time, meaning the time left after paid work time, housekeeping and caring time, as well as personal time are taken away (Roberts, 1999). Tracey (2010), making a description of the various approaches of leisure and work time, addresses the preoccupation of some investigators (Schor, 1991) over the increase of paid work hours whether in high level jobs, as a symbol of loyalty and trust towards the employer, improving the expertise of the worker, or in low waged occupations where overtime work or multi-jobs are required for facing income constraints. This very relation between time and money has been pinpointed, where the enjoyment of free time requires money for leisure activities or the purchase of goods related to these activities (what Bonke, et al. (2009) called good intensiveness), while enjoying money requires free leisure time (Boulin, 2006; Wei, et al. 2015). Therefore, their enjoyment is complementary. The economic aspect dictates the use of free time and its duration. So, the professional activity is the first factor that needs to be taken into consideration, and the choice of the profession has an impact on the ways of spending and the quantity of free time (Leovaridis and Antimiu, 2017).

On the other hand, Tracey (2010) studies the prediction of others over the creation of a leisure society and the decline of working hours after the individual's comprehension of the benefits of leisure itself on an individual level (Veblen, 1963). Yet, the latter has received more criticism over its utopian nature based on the ignorance of social inequalities and their effect on leisure opportunities (Collins, 2017). For example, Bittman and Wajcman (2000) focused on the blurred boundaries between unpaid domestic work and leisure for women, where housekeeping and childcare are camouflaged inside the concept of pure free time in comparison to men.

Going towards the approach of leisure experiences, they are considered as enjoyable and satisfactory activities, with non-monetary benefits (Tracey, 2010), in order to bring some balance in individual's lives (Edginton, et al. 1995). According to Rossman and Schlatter (2000, p. 7) leisure involves a real decision as "... an experience that is most likely to occur during an engagement that is freely chosen for the intrinsic satisfaction inherent in participating in it". Initially the focus was on personal experiences at an individual level (Hemingway, 1990), where leisure was related to the concept of self (Howe and Rancourt, 1990), as a state of mind or attitude, or as a state of life (Kraus, 2001). Later on this positioning on personal experience and free choice was criticized on the basis that leisure is highly conditioned by social, economic and political contexts, dominant roles of cultural production, and people's negotiation with these conditions (Parr and Lashua, 2004; Stebbins, 2005). In order to avoid false indications of what is a free choice within a society that offers unequally opportunities to its members (Juniu and Henderson, 2001) and that raises different culturally rooted preferences, the specification of perceived choice is proposed, while its complete elimination of the definitional spectrum of leisure is preferred (Stebbins, 2005). Stebbins – focusing on the limitation of freedom in a context where some circumstances are given and transmitted from the past – defines leisure as an uncoerced activity, meaning an activity people are not disagreeably obliged to do due to their positive memories and expectations, while taking under consideration their abilities and resources during their free time. Yet, elimination of choice from the definition of leisure experience, does not indicate its elimination from conceptualizing leisure, since people eventually choose their leisure based on their accessible alternatives; thus, choice is a sensitizing concept and not a definer (Stebbins, 2005).

Moving on, the need to further specify the activities that generates leisure experiences was considered significant in order to categorize various types of leisure. Starting from a simple base, casual leisure is born so as to express pleasurable activities like strolling in the park, taking a nap or watching television. Characterized as short-lived and intrinsically rewarding, these activities require no special training and, thus, are connected to doing things naturally (Stebbins, 1997), in a casual way. This type of leisure is further divided in six subtypes, all hedonic; that is, play, relaxation, active entertainment, passive entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory stimulation, which in combinations can be engaged in one particular activity. Playing with children or games of chance represent the first subtype, which can also be given a more serious orientation if adults desire so. Relaxation refers to a pleasant activity that makes a person be calmer. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017) A basic classification divides the leisure activities into passive and active (Holder, et al., 2009). In the passive case, the leisure activity is delivered to its consumers without their involvement, and the active one involves a physical or intellectual implication of the consumer in carrying out that activity (Stebbins, 2005). Another difference is the one between the home-based leisure, carried out within the household, like reading and watching television and non-home-based leisure, carried out outside the house, like sports, theatre, cinema and tourism (Tribe, 2005). On the other hand, active leisure insinuates active involvement to ensure own diversity, such as riddles, puzzles, and games. Sociable conversation focuses on the pleasure to socially exchange values based on participatory democracy (Stormann, 1993). Finally, sensory stimulation refers to all the elements that may arouse an individual, such as satisfying curiosity, displays of beauty, whether natural or human, creature pleasures such as eating, drinking, hearing, smelling or in a more deviant way taking drugs so as to produce pleasant alterations of mood, and thrills of movement (Stebbins, 1993). This latter case represents deviant leisure (Stebbins, 1997), undertaken by pleasure but always within the limits of

tolerant deviance, like sexual activities, drinking, gambling, consuming of soft drugs but not in a compulsive way.

Contrary to casual leisure which is too commonplace for one to find his/ her identity, Stebbins (1982) coined the term of serious leisure which initially referred to a more systematic activity done by an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer with the long-term intention to find a career based on the special skills and knowledge of this activity. Serious leisure is practiced less than casual leisure. Later on, serious leisure was defined by six qualities (Stebbins, 2007), being the one to persevere in case of embarrassment, loss or danger, to find a leisure career, to make a significant personal effort based on the acquired skills and experience, to be benefited – among others – by self-fulfilment, to create a special social context through the unique ethos that leisure generates, and to identify one with his/her chosen pursuits. Serious leisure does not mean that there are no disappointments in its experience, but that its rewards are more fulfilling. Additionally, serious leisure also has a deviant side, referring to the belief, practice and defence of aberrant religion, politics and science after a significant amount of effort. Such examples could be participation in cults, or witchcraft performance. Finally, stepping away from the frequent and career aspiring attitude of serious leisure, Stebbins (2011) proposed project-based leisure which refers to a short-term, occasional or one-shot activity, moderately complicated and creative, and realized during free time. Examples of such leisure activities refer to participation in birthdays or national holidays and in the production of an occasional context for celebration, which could require some skill or knowledge.

In sum, previous investigation has tried to specify the various formats of leisure in relation to activities, time, work and dedication to the experience.

In respect to the personality profile of a person, there are two completely different profiles for Romanian people: one characterized through low emotional instability, associated with high openness, extravagance, agreeability and conscientiousness. It is more frequent in people between 30 and 50 years, with higher education. The second profile characterized through high instability and low openness, extravagance, agreeability and conscientiousness, is more frequent in people with ages between 14-19 and over 60 years, being associated with a lower level of education (David, et al., 2015; David, 2015). Some segments present high levels of individualism in Romania, especially young people that are probably under the influence of the occidental culture with which they identify with.

2. Research methodology

The present study is focused on a better understanding of the perceptions and satisfaction of Romanians concerning their leisure activities. For investigations an exploratory and a descriptive research were performed. To explore the field of leisure it was used a secondary data research on different sources from Romania and abroad.

A descriptive research was conducted to identify the different types of leisure activities among Romanians and their level of satisfaction (Dinu, et al., 2016). As research method, the survey was used and for data collection it was performed a face to face interview with the Romanians. Involving an elaborate data collection and processing work, the research was a longitudinal one and last more than a year (Cosma, et al., 2013). The first part of the research started during 2015 and the second part in 2016.

As data collection instrument, it was implemented a questionnaire made up of 24 questions that wanted to identify several issues concerning the perceptions and attitudes of the Romanians regarding their leisure time. Different types of questions were formulated, both structured and unstructured questions, pre-coded with given answers and questions with scaled answers to find different aspect about leisure in Romania. The questionnaire was structured in two parts. The first one contains 16 questions which offer basic information for the research such as: Romanians free time in a free and working day, the satisfaction on their free time, the leisure activities involved in both free and working day, the most preferred leisure activity, etc. The second part includes other 8 questions bringing socio-demographic information used for the classification of the respondents (the age of the respondents, the gender, their education, occupation, monthly average income, nationality, marital status and residence). As a result, a sample of 2580 valid questionnaires was retained in the analysis.

Before applying the questionnaires to a representative sample for the Romanian population, the questionnaire was pretested using students as respondents to find out if the questions are clear enough, if they are understandable from all viewpoints, if they are in the right order and if the answers provided are sufficient. Another tested aspect was the time needed to fill-in the questionnaire (Văleanu, et al., 2009).

The present paper uses only a part of the data collected in this marketing research. The main purpose is to identify the profile of Romanians concerning leisure activities.

3. Results and discussions

An increased concern about what leisure is and how people spend their leisure time it can be notice nowadays worldwide. When people are talking about leisure, they have different personal approaches in their minds. These are images of freedom without constrains and obligations. The present study reveals that peoples' free time in a working day is in average 4.64 hours for the Romanians. For a free day, the average free time is 9.23 hours. Figure no. 1 shows that Romanians are 66.05% satisfied and very satisfied with their free time and only 10.62% are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied concerning free time.

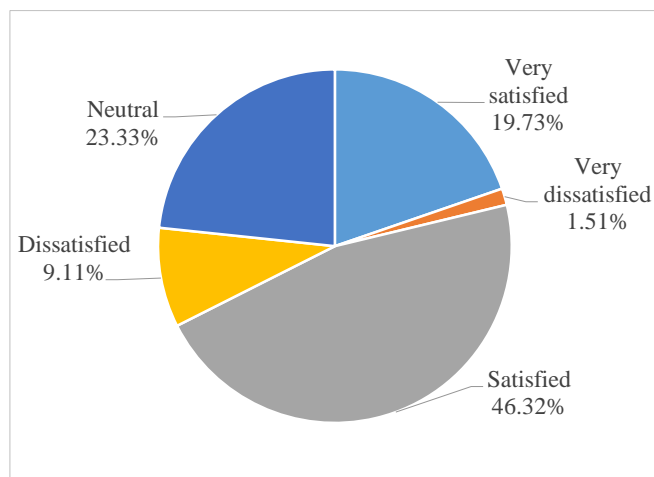


Figure no. 1: Satisfaction on your free time

Figure no. 2 presents the leisure activities and their frequency for the Romanians in a working day. A scale from frequently (4) to never (1) was used to analyse the variety of leisure activities. The middle of the scale is 2.50, between occasionally and seldom. The research emphasis that calculating the average frequency of each activity, 10 out of 24 of the activities are above the middle of the scale meaning that Romanians are most involved in those activities.

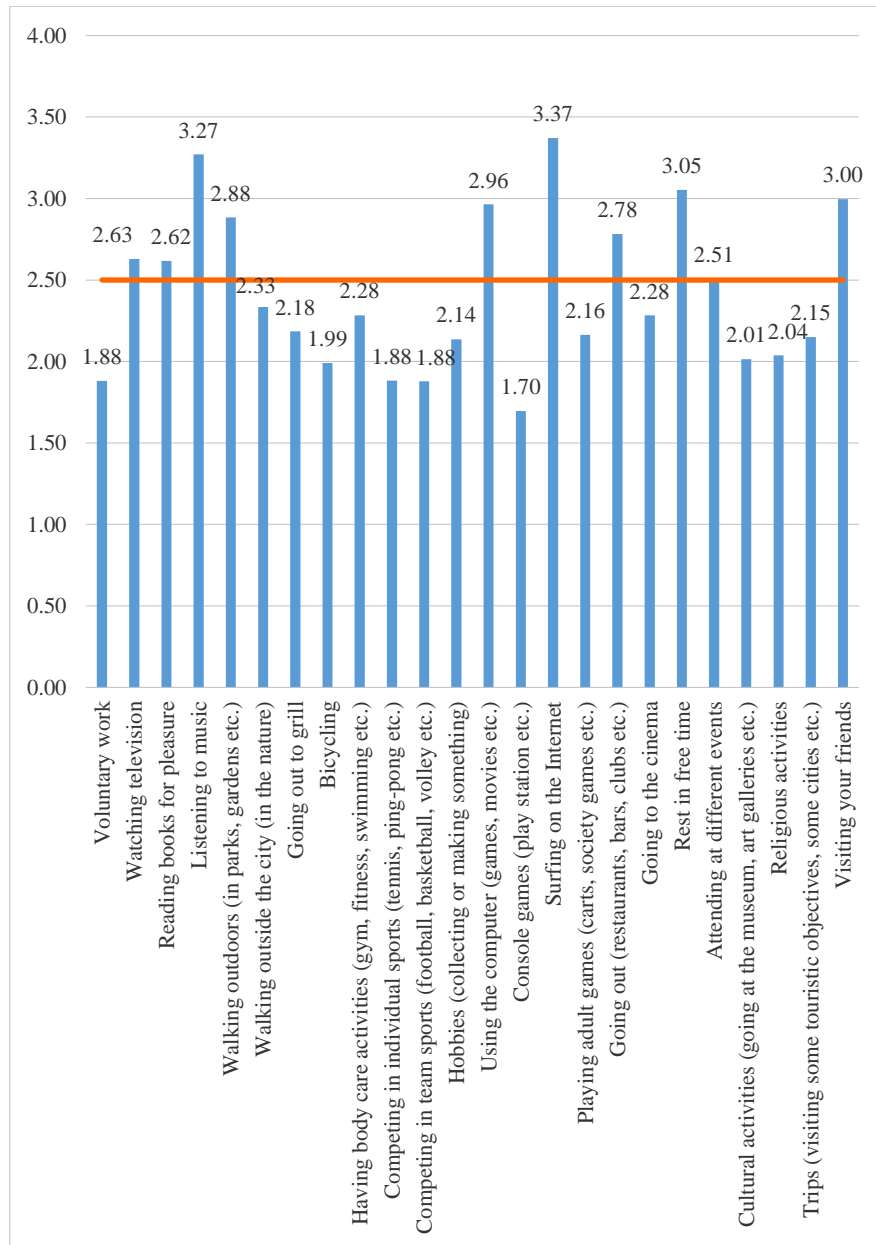


Figure no. 2: Leisure activities in a working day

In a working day (table no. 1) respondents are never involved in console games (59.26%), in competing in team sports (46.66%) and voluntary work (46.35%). In an opposite part the most frequent leisure activity in a working day is surfing on the Internet (60.07%), followed by listening to music (50.58%) and using the computer for games, movies etc. (39.72%).

Table no. 1: Leisure activities involved in a working day

| Types of activities | Never | Seldom | Occasionally | Frequently |
|---|-------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Voluntary work | 1196 | 729 | 421 | 234 |
| Watching television | 422 | 754 | 764 | 640 |
| Reading books for pleasure | 380 | 755 | 918 | 527 |
| Listening to music | 108 | 392 | 775 | 1305 |
| Walking outdoors (in parks, gardens etc.) | 184 | 646 | 1037 | 713 |
| Walking outside the city (in the nature) | 487 | 1028 | 783 | 282 |
| Going out to grill | 659 | 990 | 728 | 203 |
| Bicycling | 1037 | 789 | 496 | 258 |
| Having body care activities (gym, fitness, swimming etc.) | 757 | 755 | 646 | 422 |
| Competing in individual sports (tennis, ping-pong etc.) | 1129 | 800 | 474 | 177 |
| Competing in team sports (football, basketball, volley etc.) | 1204 | 709 | 445 | 222 |
| Hobbies (collecting or making something) | 873 | 780 | 628 | 299 |
| Using the computer (games, movies etc.) | 292 | 533 | 730 | 1025 |
| Console games (play station etc.) | 1529 | 515 | 328 | 208 |
| Surfing on the Internet | 146 | 298 | 586 | 1550 |
| Playing adult games (carts, society games etc.) | 782 | 865 | 662 | 271 |
| Going out (restaurants, bars, clubs etc.) | 264 | 655 | 1041 | 620 |
| Going to the cinema | 558 | 980 | 796 | 246 |
| Rest in free time | 99 | 593 | 962 | 926 |
| Attending at different events | 312 | 958 | 1005 | 305 |
| Cultural activities (going at the museum, art galleries etc.) | 839 | 1029 | 549 | 163 |
| Religious activities | 983 | 812 | 492 | 293 |
| Trips (visiting some touristic objectives, some cities etc.) | 645 | 1059 | 721 | 155 |
| Visiting your friends | 133 | 518 | 1154 | 775 |

Figure no. 3 represents the leisure activities and their frequency for the Romanians in a free day. The same scale was used for evaluating activities from a free day. The results show that 14 out of 24 of the activities are above the middle of the scale meaning that Romanians are most involved in those activities.

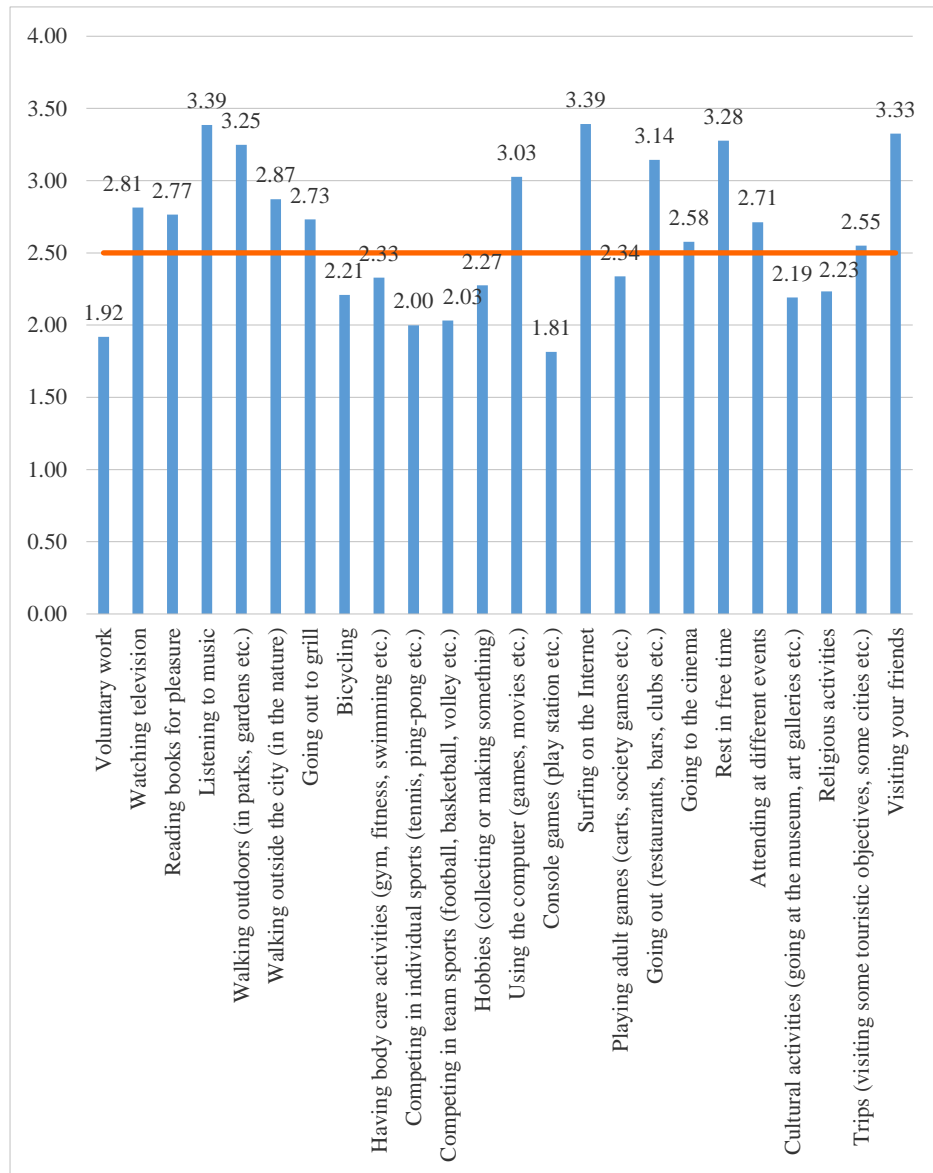


Figure no. 3: Leisure activities in a free day

In a free day (table no. 2) respondents are most frequent involved in surfing on the Internet (60.89%), in listening to music (56.51%) and rest in free time (48.56%). As opposite, the leisure activity in a free day that respondents are never involved in, are console games (55.38%), followed by voluntary work (45.85%) and competing in team sports (41.78%).

Table no. 2: Leisure activities involved in a free day

| Types of activities | Never | Seldom | Occasionally | Frequently |
|---|-------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Voluntary work | 1183 | 684 | 452 | 261 |
| Watching television | 368 | 595 | 768 | 849 |
| Reading books for pleasure | 322 | 657 | 904 | 697 |
| Listening to music | 85 | 293 | 744 | 1458 |
| Walking outdoors (in parks, gardens etc.) | 95 | 364 | 927 | 1194 |
| Walking outside the city (in the nature) | 209 | 615 | 1052 | 704 |
| Going out to grill | 251 | 755 | 1011 | 563 |
| Bicycling | 856 | 733 | 584 | 407 |
| Having body care activities (gym, fitness, swimming etc.) | 755 | 703 | 641 | 481 |
| Competing in individual sports (tennis, ping-pong etc.) | 1029 | 782 | 513 | 256 |
| Competing in team sports (football, basketball, volley etc.) | 1078 | 662 | 521 | 319 |
| Hobbies (collecting or making something) | 767 | 747 | 657 | 409 |
| Using the computer (games, movies etc.) | 310 | 433 | 714 | 1123 |
| Console games (play station etc.) | 1429 | 491 | 371 | 289 |
| Surfing on the Internet | 150 | 260 | 599 | 1571 |
| Playing adult games (carts, society games etc.) | 667 | 768 | 755 | 390 |
| Going out (restaurants, bars, clubs etc.) | 158 | 403 | 928 | 1091 |
| Going to the cinema | 396 | 751 | 981 | 452 |
| Rest in free time | 75 | 389 | 863 | 1253 |
| Attending at different events | 241 | 761 | 1079 | 499 |
| Cultural activities (going at the museum, art galleries etc.) | 676 | 976 | 685 | 243 |
| Religious activities | 805 | 790 | 565 | 420 |
| Trips (visiting some touristic objectives, some cities etc.) | 300 | 907 | 1024 | 349 |
| Visiting your friends | 64 | 265 | 1016 | 1235 |

In order to identify the Romanians preferences for home-based versus non-home-based activities and active versus passive activities, a differential semantic scale was implemented. Analysing the result, the respondents prefer non-home-based activities instead of home-based and active ones instead of passive ones.

It can be noticed from figure no. 4 that Romanians prefer spending leisure time with their friends and family, not alone.

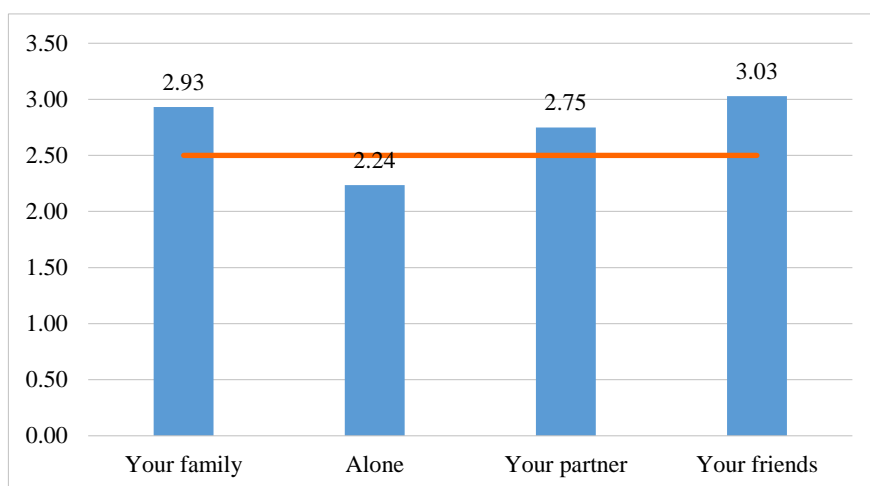


Figure no. 4: With whom respondents spent their leisure time

Estimating the monthly budget spent for the leisure activities, 66.66% of the respondents are spending less than 400 lei/ month representing less than 100 euro (figure no. 5).

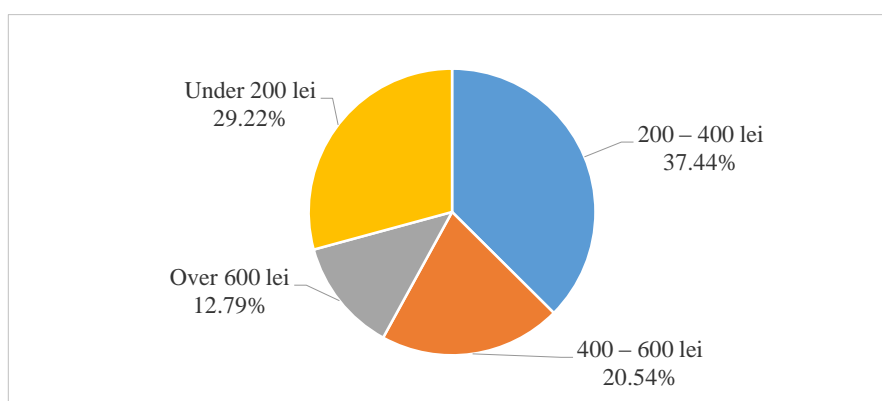


Figure no. 5: Budget for leisure activities

Table no. 3 presents the profile of the respondents, considering demographic characteristics.

Table no. 3: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | | |
| <14 | 13 | 0.50% |
| 15-18 | 121 | 4.69% |
| 19-24 | 1212 | 46.98% |
| 25-34 | 566 | 21.94% |
| 35-44 | 284 | 11.01% |
| 45-54 | 265 | 10.27% |

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 55-64 | 86 | 3.33% |
| >64 | 33 | 1.28% |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 1403 | 54.38% |
| Male | 1177 | 45.62% |
| Education | | |
| Basic studies | 143 | 5.54% |
| High school | 1118 | 43.33% |
| Post-secondary | 174 | 6.74% |
| University studies | 972 | 37.67% |
| Post-university studies | 173 | 6.71% |
| Income | | |
| <700 | 657 | 25.47% |
| 700-1500 | 824 | 31.94% |
| 1500-2200 | 547 | 21.20% |
| 2200-2900 | 253 | 9.81% |
| > 2900 | 299 | 11.59% |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 1116 | 43.26% |
| In a relationship without children | 830 | 32.17% |
| In a relationship with children | 634 | 24.57% |

Concerning the age of the respondents, the majority of them (46.98%) are between 19-24 years old. The smallest percentages are represented by children under 18 (5.19%) and seniors up to 55 (4.61%). Around 54% of the respondents are female and 46% are male. Analysing the level of education, the majority (43.33%) has graduated only high school studies. The study reveals that the majority of the participants are educated (graduated post-secondary, university and post-university studies representing more than 50%). In respect with the income, but correlated with the age, the majority (57.41%) has under 1500 lei representing around 335 euro. Looking at the marital status, and considering the ages of the majority, around 43% are single. Useful information for identifying the participant's profile is that 76% of the respondents do not have children.

Further on it was assumed that it can be a relation between some demographic characteristics (independent variables) and basic information for the present research such as number of free time hours and types of leisure activities both in a working and free day (dependent variables). A chi squared test was ran to test if there is a relationship between age and the number of hours of free time on a working day (Table no. 4).

Table no. 4: Relationship between age and number of hours of free time on a working day

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 277.264 ^a | 28 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 235.214 | 28 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 40.894 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 2580 | | |

a. 8 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .71.

| Symmetric Measures | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | | Value | Asymp. Std. Error ^a | Approx. T ^b | Approx. Sig. |
| Ordinal by Ordinal | Kendall's tau-b | -.164 | .017 | -9.741 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | | 2580 | | | |
| a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. | | | | | |
| b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis. | | | | | |

The results were statistically significant ($\chi^2(28) = 277.264$, $p < .001$) although the number of cells with an expected count of less than 5 was border-line at 20%. Kendall's tau-b was -0.164 indicating a weak inverse relationship between age and number of free time hours. Only 16% of the variation in number of free time hours can be explained by age. This means that people have less free time as they grow older.

Regarding the relationship between age and number of free time hours in a free day (table no. 5), the results were statistically significant ($\chi^2(28) = 156.472$, $p < .001$). Kendall's tau-b was -0.155 indicating a weak inverse relationship between age and number of hours of free time. Only 15.5% of the variation in number of free time hours can be explained by age meaning that people have less free time as they grow older.

Table no. 5: Relationship between age and number of hours of free time on a free day

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | 156.472 ^a | 28 | .000 | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | 146.934 | 28 | .000 | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | 71.861 | 1 | .000 | |
| N of Valid Cases | | 2580 | | | |
| a. 9 cells (22.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24. | | | | | |
| Symmetric Measures | | | | | |
| | | Value | Asymp. Std. Error ^a | Approx. T ^b | Approx. Sig. |
| Ordinal by Ordinal | Kendall's tau-b | -.155 | .017 | -9.259 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | | 2580 | | | |
| a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. | | | | | |
| b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis. | | | | | |

The second analysed independent variable was the education level and the dependent one the type of leisure activities. Education focuses on taking the decision in a rational way, considering knowledge as being rational and objective (Bratianu and Vătămănescu, 2018). So, the premise is that people with a higher educational level will be more rational in choosing their leisure activities. A chi squared test was performed to study the relationship between these variables on a working/ free day. The results show that although there were many statistically significant relationships most of them were weak, as indicated by the low value of Kendal's Tau-b.

In a working day for 14 out of 24 leisure activities there is a weak direct or indirect relationship with the respondents' education level. Cultural activities and reading books for pleasure are the most influenced activities by the level of education. The obtained results are similar with those from Rada (2015) who concluded that more educated people choose to be involved in certain categories of activities such as reading books or magazines, walks, excursions.

In a free day the results reveal there is a weak direct or indirect relationship with the respondents' education level for 16 out of 24 leisure activities. Cultural activities and trips (visiting some touristic objectives, some cities etc.) are the most influenced activities by the level of education.

Conclusions

The present research is a trial of understanding the Romanians' perception, attitudes and satisfaction level regarding their leisure time and activities and to use this knowledge in identifying and understanding the Romanian's profile concerning leisure.

The study reveals the following leisure profile of Romanians: are between 19-24 years old, both female and male, having graduated high school studies and being single without children, with an average monthly income under 1500 lei; the free time is 4.64 hours in a working day and 9.23 hours in a free day, are satisfied and very satisfied with their free time; the most frequent leisure activities in a working day are surfing on the Internet, listening to music and using the computer for games, movies etc. and in a free day are surfing on the Internet, listening to music and rest in free time; prefer non-home-based activities and active ones, spend leisure time with their friends and family and have less than 400 lei/ month for leisure activities; even in a free or working day have less free time as they grow older and cultural activities, reading books for pleasure and trips are the most influenced activities by the level of education.

The results of this research offer practical implications and recommendations for leisure providers (public sector, voluntary sector and private one) in their planning process and in designing unique leisure products to their targets.

Besides the limitations specific to any scientific research, the paper does not analyse the links between different psychological Romanian profiles identified in recognized researches done by Sava and Popa (2011) and David (2015) and the Romanian profile regarding the leisure activities they are involved in. Another limitation of the study is given by the fact that there is not an analysis of the leisure time during a working day and a free one, based on the professional activity in which they are involved in. These limitations represent starting points of a future research.

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