

Article

Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Consumer Profile of Hunting Tourism and Trophy Hunting from Tradition to Protected Areas: Study Case on Romania and Spain

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Abstract: Hunting has major importance from many perspectives: As a product of leisure and recreation, as a tool for conservation and wildlife management, as the main economic activity in rural areas, or as a cultural heritage and traditional activity for countries around the world, especially for countries in Europe and Africa. Therefore, this research fills a gap in the literature and offers a cross-cultural opinion and perceptions of 198 hunters from Romania and Spain. The aim of the paper is to analyze the perceptions and opinions of hunters regarding hunting tourism through an online self-administrated questionnaire by convenience sampling using hunters associations from these countries. Among the values that identify hunting as an activity, hunters highlight the *human values* (friendship, company, ethics), *ecological values* (love of nature associated with hunting as a tool to understand and enjoy the natural environment), and *social values* (resources generated, hobby, effort). The respondents can self-criticize some components and aspects of hunting groups. Hunters believe that the future of this sector is moving towards commercial hunting, associated with purchasing power to ensure results. Regardless of the nationality of the hunters, their values related to this sector are similar.

Keywords: hunting tourism; Romania; Spain; hunters; quantitative analysis; values; protected area; traditions



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1. Introduction

Hunting is one of the most important activities of the primary sector [1] whose evolution—from the primitive character of the activity as a surviving purpose—until now has undergone remarkable technical, organizational, social, and economic transformations.

Hunting tourism is defined as [2] “an organized paid trip aimed on satisfying the needs of consumers (hunters) in service or extreme, sports and recreational or cognitive character in the process of their staying in the natural habitat of hunting animals”. Hunting tourists are those hunters who travel outside their usual hunting area [3].

Currently, hunting can be analyzed from four perspectives:

- As a product of leisure and recreative [4], namely hunting tourism, due to the increase in experience in practicing this information in recent decades;
- as the use and conservation of natural spaces to keep the animal population controlled and ordered the number of specimens to support the natural balance, intersected with wildlife regulation [5], the commodification of wildlife experiences [6], and wildlife management for sustainable hunting [7];
- as an economic activity by setting up an income supplement in hunting areas, a market hunting being created as a new tourism economy [5] especially in rural areas [8], job-creating activity [1,9], and sometimes with the purpose of reducing poverty [10];
- as cultural heritage [9,11–13] and traditional activity [14].

Trophy hunting and hunting tourism have socioeconomic and ecological benefits [15–18] at the local and regional levels [9,19]. Moreover, as a primeval human activity, hunting has an increasing effect on the conservation of nature and positive economic effects through hunting tourism [20]. Trophy hunting tourism plays an important and often controversial role in wildlife conservation and community livelihood especially for African countries [8,21–24]. For example, the annual amount spent by trophy hunters in South Africa is USD 250 million and contributes more than USD 341 million to the South African economy, and supports more than 17,000 employment opportunities [8]. Practically, the core of the South Africa tourism industry is based on wildlife tourism and hunting is one of the major income generators for product owners [25–27].

Hunting has also been the subject of worldwide criticism in recent years, both moral and economic value of hunting tourism business [6] or regarding the negative impact among the locals [10,21] being researched by academics. Both ethically, as well as biodiversity conservation, or economically [28], it is rightly called into question that hunting is an activity based exclusively on the appetite of a limited group of people who enjoy the mere fact of killing animals. This led to a logical and progressive social disappointment with an activity involving the free and unjustified death of wild and domestic animals [29]. The hunting sector has reacted to this by creating a lobby with ramifications in political and economic power that desperately seeks the survival of the hunt by creating an image that hunting is a sustainable development factor [30], a tool for population management, and an essential economic activity for the rural environment [31]. Moreover, in most African countries, the prohibition of hunting has a negative economic impact on the livelihoods and rural community [29,32]. Furthermore, tourism and hunting both generate substantial revenues for communities and private operators in Africa [33]. On the other hand, another important aspect is pointed out: as traditional international trophy hunting destinations are becoming less accessible due to hunting restrictions and regulations, new destinations are entering the scene, such as the Republic of Kyrgyzstan [34].

The last available statistical evolution of the number of hunters in Europe is presented in Figure 1. France is in first place with 1,313,000 hunters, secondly Spain with 980,000 hunters, and Romania with 60,000 hunters in 2017.

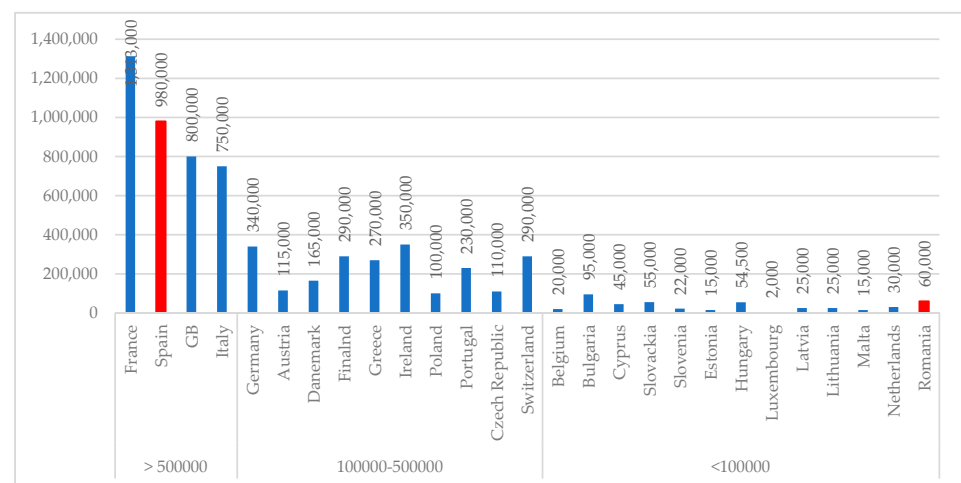


Figure 1. Number of hunters in Europe in 2017.

For Romanian rural communities, the role of hunting tourism must be to preserve the sustainability of fauna habitats [35,36] to develop the rural tourism market [37] or rural communities [38] and promote sustainable nature-based tourism through conforming hunting tourism to modern tendencies which involve responsible traveling to natural areas [39]. Moreover, there are European countries, such as the Czech Republic, that promote and sustain hunting tourism as a modern product for the country’s development, especially for rural regions [40,41] or, for Croatia, to form a hunting tourism brand [42].

In general, society's, stakeholders, and local household [19] views on hunting, the economic and environmental aspects [43] have been studied in more detail than the opinions of its own hunters and neglect a parameter as important as demand [43]. Moreover, there are no research results regarding Romania or at the national level [1] but for:

- Other European countries, such as Ukraine [2], Spain [3,44], Serbia [37,45,46], Croatia [20,42,47–49], Sweden [6,9,50], Norway [4,12,51], Czech Republic [40,41], and Finland [38,52];
- African countries such as Namibia [17,21,23,26,28–30,33,53,54], Ghana [55], Botswana [32,56,57], Zimbabwe [15,58], Senegal [28], and Ethiopia [16,59];
- other countries, such as Pakistan [19], Canada [5].

Therefore, this research fills a gap in the literature and offers a cross-cultural opinion and perceptions of hunters from two European countries, Romania and Spain, both with a traditional activity of hunting and trophy hunting. The aim of the paper is to analyze the perceptions and opinions of hunters from Romania and Spain regarding hunting tourism through an online self-administrated questionnaire (in Romanian language and Spanish language) by convenience sampling using hunters associations from these countries. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To find the values of the hunting for the Romanian and Spanish hunters;
- to identify the preferences of the subjects regarding the hunting method and the type of hunted species;
- to identify the annual budget allocated by the hunters from these countries;
- to study the opinion of hunters regarding the future of this activity and the opinion of the current society about hunting from their perspectives;
- to establish similarities and differences of the Romanian and Spanish hunters by using statistical methods (the non-parametrical correlations, the Spearman coefficient and the chi-square bivariate test).

The research results show that the values that the hunters exhibit the most are the human (friendship, companionship, ethics), ecological (love of nature, associated with hunting as a tool for understanding and enjoying the natural environment), and social (resources generated, hobby, effort) aspects of hunting. A majority of those interviewed consider that society has a negative view of hunting. In the future the traditional hunting must be adapted to the present times, keeping its the commercial component if it want to subsist. Self-criticism carried out by the hunters themselves, invites us to think that the existence of future meeting points, not exempt from debate, with anti-hunting collectives, being the appreciation of nature and the interest in maintaining it, is the basis of the future of hunting.

2. Materials and Methods

According to the aim and the objectives of the research, we applied an online self-administrated questionnaire [3,8,9,16,44,52]. Data were collected from 15 April to 20 May 2021. The questionnaires were distributed in Romania and Spain, in the native language of the respondents through convenience sampling [55,58,60] on the hunter's associations and groups from Romania and Spain [8]. By applying the questionnaire, an analysis was made of some important aspects: society's perception of hunters, people who harm hunters, significant values in the hunting world, and in which direction this activity is directed, to make a comparison between the two samples analyzed and to know the economic and environmental potential of this activity. The questionnaire has 23 questions structured in three sections according to the research objectives:

- The first five questions regarding the hunting data;
- eight questions about the position of hunters in society and the values of hunting as an activity from the hunter's point of view;
- the last ten questions refer to socio-demographic data and hunting preferences for describing the hunter profile.

The research sample has 298 respondents—158 Romanian and 140 Spanish hunters. The comparative structure of the samples' socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1. The results show that only for Spain the sample has both females and males, all the 158 Romanian hunters are males. The average age for both nationalities is 38 years old. Moreover, the distribution of the samples according to the occupation status is approximately the same for Romania and Spain.

Table 1. Sample description—general socio-demographic data.

Characteristics	Absolute Frequencies		Relative Frequencies	
	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)
Gender				
Female	0	11	0%	8%
Male	158	129	100%	92%
Age				
Under 30 years old	36	34	23%	24%
31–40 years old	54	47	34%	34%
41–50 years old	41	42	26%	30%
Over 50 years old	27	17	17%	12%
Occupational status				
Business owner	17	18	11%	13%
Freelance	16	11	10%	8%
Manager	14	12	9%	9%
Employed with higher education	74	65	47%	46%
Employed with secondary education	29	26	18%	19%
Unemployed	1	0	1%	0%
Retired	7	8	4%	6%

Source: own calculations.

Regarding the place of origin of the Romanian and Spanish hunters, the distribution is presented in Figure 2a,b. For both countries, most hunters are from the country capital but cover an important geographical area of each country.

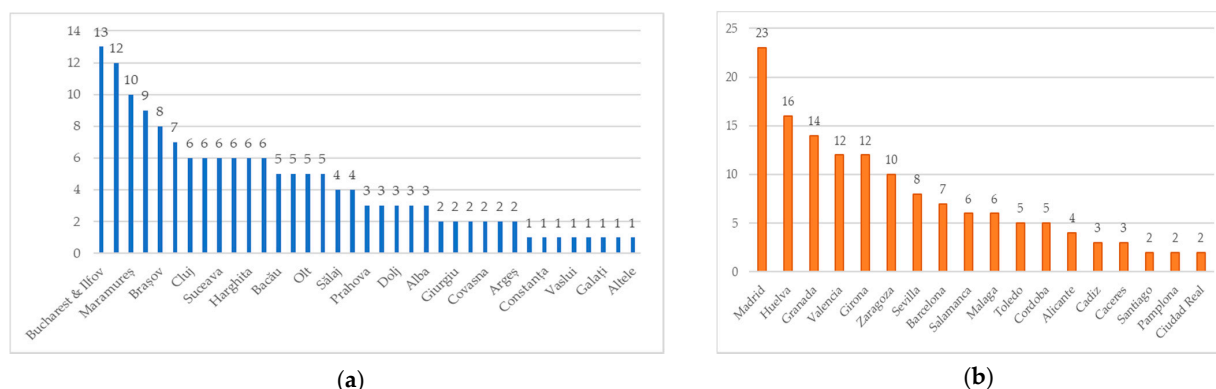


Figure 2. (a) Place of origin of Romanian hunters; (b) place of origin of Spanish hunters.

To emphasize the relation between *hunters' profiles* (results are presented in Section 3.1), *hunting data* (results are presented in Section 3.2), the *position of hunters in society*, and the *values of hunting as activity* (results are presented in Section 3.3), we applied non-parametrical statistical methods [43] due of the categorical data of the research, respectively:

- The Spearman correlations coefficient
- The chi-square bivariate test [58] inside of each group, respectively, for Romania and Spain. These results are presented in Section 3.4.

For the statistical analysis of the collected data, the SPSS 23.0 (licensed) software was used and Microsoft Excel for graphical representations. In the Results section of the article, all the research results are presented comparatively, not separately, for Romania and Spain.

3. Results

3.1. The Romanian and Spanish Hunters' Profile

Due to the specific responses of the respondents in the study, we will present first the results for the *profile of the hunter*, comparatively for Romania and Spain in Table 2.

Table 2. The hunters profile.

Characteristics	Absolute Frequencies		Relative Frequencies	
	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)
The hunting places				
In my own country	139	95	88%	68%
Abroad	1	10	1%	7%
Both	18	35	11%	25%
Type of hunting				
Small game	21	15	13%	11%
Big game	27	24	17%	17%
Both	110	101	70%	72%
Number of hunting days/year				
<10 days	8	5	5%	4%
11–49 days	63	48	40%	34%
50–100 days	43	49	27%	35%
101–200 days	11	9	7%	6%
>200 days	33	29	21%	21%
The annual budget allocated for hunting				
EUR < 1500	96	60	61%	35%
EUR 1501–3000	44	45	28%	32%
EUR > 3000	18	35	11%	25%
Visiting the tourist objectives and the surroundings in the hunting' area				
Yes	120	105	76%	75%
No	38	35	24%	25%

Source: own calculations.

It can be seen (Table 2) that most Romanian hunters (88%) act locally and a quarter of the Spanish respondents hunt both locally and abroad. The percentages of the type of hunting could be considered quite similar for Romania and Spain. For the number of hunting days/year, differences could be observed only for a medium time: 11–49 days and 50–100 days per year. We have to observe the different structures of the annual budget for hunting: 61% of Romanian hunters expends under EUR 1500 and 57% of Spanish hunters more than this amount.

Regarding trophy hunting, the distribution is presented in Figure 3.

We can observe that the Romanian respondents are big game trophy hunters and the Spanish respondents are smaller game trophy hunters.

3.2. The Results for Hunting Data

We will analyze the first two questions in this section of the questionnaire together due to the close connection between the importance of hunting in the life of each respondent and the fact that most of the time they think about it before sleeping (Figure 4).

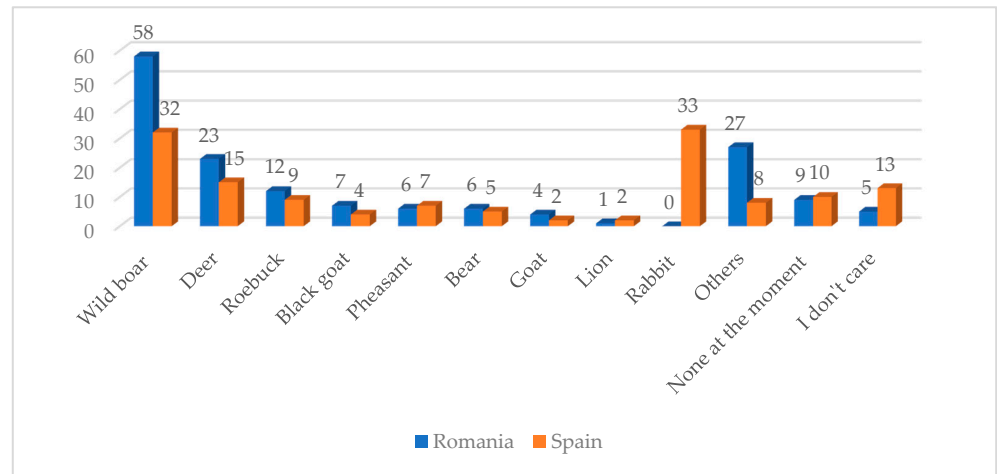


Figure 3. Trophy hunting.

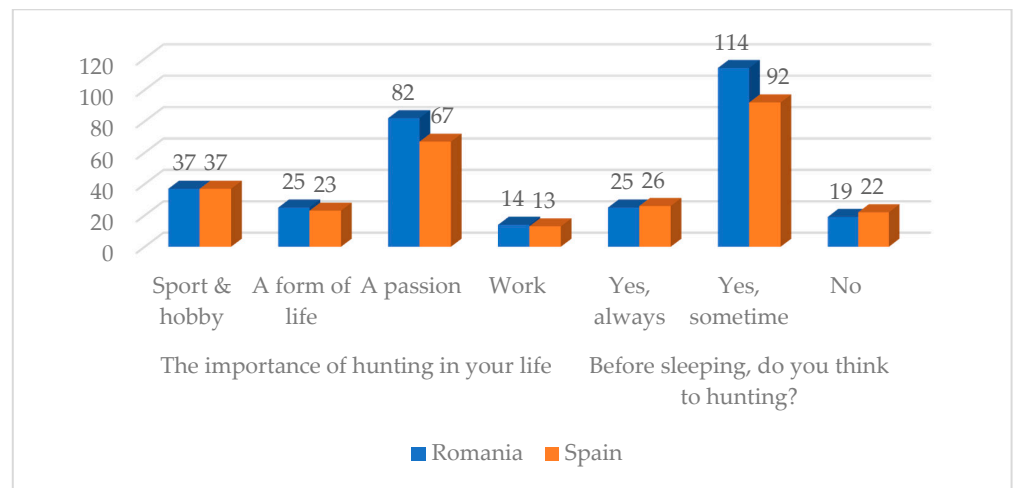


Figure 4. Distribution of the answers for two questions regarding the hunting data.

The distribution and structure of the Romanian and Spanish hunters together with the questions can be observed comparatively in Table 3.

3.3. The Position of Hunters in Society and the Values of Hunting as Activity

The first question of this part of the research refers to what hunters think that could be the current opinion of society about hunting. Therefore, 84 Romanian hunters (53%) and 74 Spanish hunters (53%) perceived a negative reaction of society regarding hunting; 62 Romanian hunters (39%) and 56 Spanish hunters (40%) think that this could depend on which economic sector represents the company; only 12 Romanian hunters (8%) and 10 Spanish hunters (7%) perceived a positive reaction of society regarding the hunting activities.

The perceptions of Romanian hunters regarding who or what could damage or harm the hunting, the hierarchy of the answers are: 54%—persons who do not know what hunting means, 14%—hunters without ethical code, 12%—local administration and politicians, 9%—persons without any respect for nature, 5%—the ecologists, 5%—the technology, 1%—the communication tools. The structure of the Spanish hunters for the same question is: 59%—persons who do not know what hunting means, 11% each for: hunters without ethical code and persons without any respect for nature, 9%—local administration and politicians, 6%—the technology, 4%—the ecologists, 1%—the communication tools.

Table 3. The distribution and structure of answers for other hunting data.

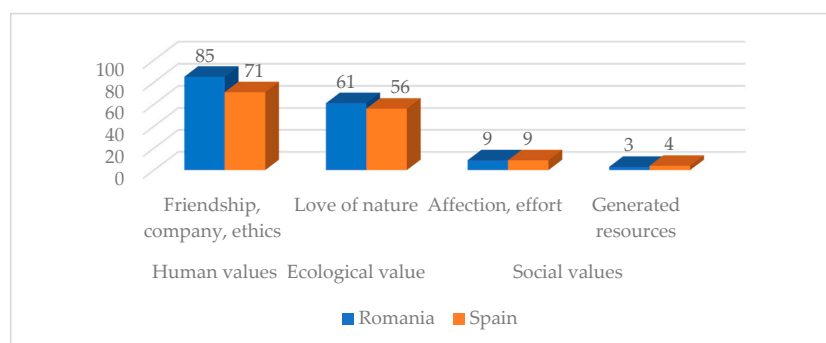
Characteristics/Questions and Answers	Absolute Frequencies		Relative Frequencies	
	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)	Romania (n = 158)	Spain (n = 140)
The word that would describe you as a hunter, could be:				
Person who loves animals	44	48	28%	34%
Person who respects ethics and traditions	55	43	35%	31%
Responsible and cautious person	26	22	16%	16%
Sport person	1	0	1%	0%
Passionate person	30	25	19%	18%
Disappointed person	2	2	1%	1%
The special hunting moment maybe considered:				
Hunting itself	36	43	23%	31%
The trophy	0	0	0%	0%
Emotional and sentimental value	56	44	35%	31%
The tradition and ethics of hunting	66	53	42%	38%
The greatest hunting aspiration might be				
To continue to practice hunting	25	31	16%	22%
To maintain the values of hunting (emotions, feelings, ethics, and traditions)	131	107	83%	76%
No aspirations	1	1	1%	1%
To make a living from hunting	1	1	1%	1%
To kill, the trophy, the quantitative	0	0	0%	0%

Source: own calculations.

Regarding the message of hunters might be for the persons against hunting, the structure of the answers are:

- For the *Romanian hunters*: 52%—I would invite them to learn about hunting, 40%—Only have an opinion if they know what hunting is, 5%—Nothing, 3%—To have respect for hunters.
- For the *Spanish hunters*: 56%—I would invite them to learn about hunting, 36%—Only have an opinion if they know what hunting is, 4%—Nothing, 4%—To have respect for hunters.

The values of hunting are presented, comparatively, in Figure 5. Regarding *what they would like to disappear from the world of hunting*, the hierarchy of the answers is the same for Romanian and Spanish sampling: 61% for Romania, respectively, 64% for Spain opted for *poor hunting and administrative management* followed by hunters without ethics (25% for Romania and 19% for Spain), 8% for Romania and 11% for Spain opted for *mischievous hunting*, about 5% for improper weapons, only 1% for Romania and zero opted for trophy collectors.

**Figure 5.** Hunting values.

For the aspects regarding the improvements proposed by the hunters, the structures of answers are presented in Figure 6 for the Romanian hunters and Figure 7 for the Spanish hunters.

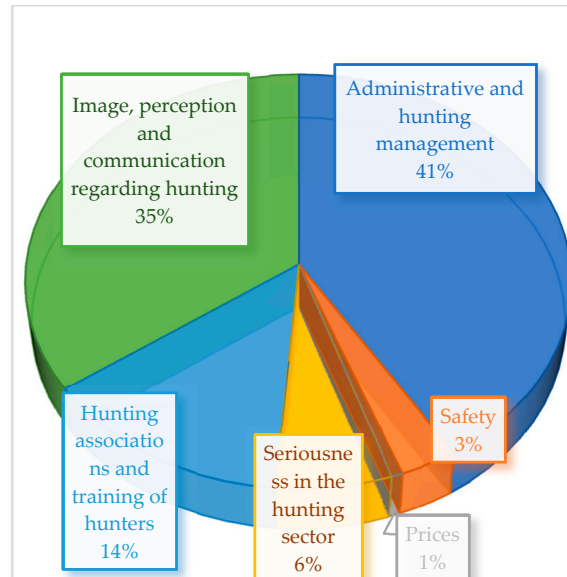


Figure 6. Romania.

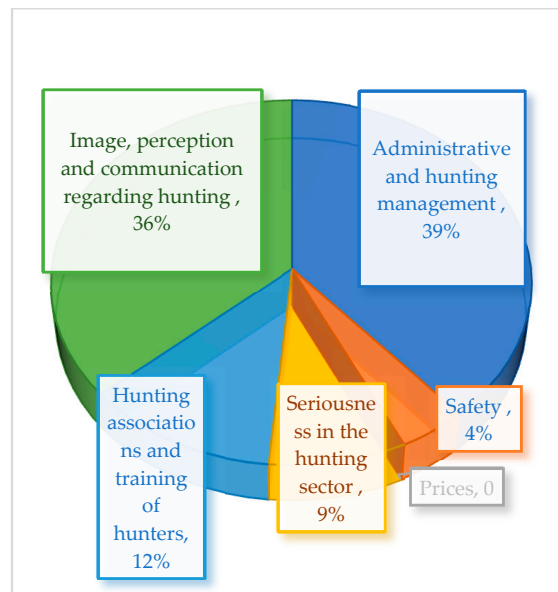


Figure 7. Spain.

The respondents were asked to answer other important aspects of hunting from their own perspectives: *What obligations would you impose on hunting?* The distribution of the answers was as follows:

- For the *Romanian hunters*: 59%—Maximum compliance with hunting rules, 26%—Training on environmental protection and security, 8%—Respecting the environment, 5%—Blood alcohol control, 3%—none, 0%—payment of the taxes.
- For the *Spanish hunters*: 54%—Maximum compliance with hunting rules, 29%—Training on environmental protection and security, 11%—Respecting the environment, 6%—Blood alcohol control, 1%—none, 0%—payment of the taxes.

The last questions of the research refer to *the future direction for hunting* in the Romanian and Spanish hunters' opinions showing that 33% for Romania and 31% for Spain hope for a *traditional hunting adapted to the present*, 28% for Romania and 32% for Spain believe in an uncertain future for hunting, 23% for Romania and 21% for Spain think that hunting will be only a business, 5% from each country think that hunting will disappear in the future, only 3%, respectively, 2% of hunters think hunting has a future in their country of origin.

3.4. The Statistical Analysis of the Relation between Hunters' Profiles, Hunting Data and the Position of Hunters in Society and the Values of Hunting as Activity

To analyze if there are correlations between different research variables, we applied the SPSS 23.0 software (Spearman correlations) due to the categorical data of the research. Only the statistically significant results were retained. The results for Romania are presented in Table 4 and show that:

- This is a positive correlation of low intensity (0.237), statistically significant (p -value = 0.003) between variables "Before sleeping, do you think to hunting?" and "Visiting the tourist objectives and the surroundings the hunting' area". This correlation could indicate that those hunters who intensively think about hunting also visit the touristic objectives and the surrounding of the hunting area.
- There is a low-intensity negative, statistically significant (p -value = 0.000) correlation (−0.314) between variables occupational status and the annual budget allocated for hunting. These results could also indicate that the young Romanian hunters allocate a larger budget for hunting than older ones.

Table 4. Correlation coefficients for Romania.

		Before Sleeping, Do You Think to Hunting?	Occupational Status	The Annual Budget Allocated for Hunting	Visiting the Tourist Objectives and the Surroundings the Hunting Area
Before sleeping, do you think to hunting?	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.070	−0.071	0.237 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.383	0.378	0.003
	N	158	158	158	158
Occupational status	Correlation coefficient		1.000	−0.314 **	0.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.867
	N		158	158	158
The annual budget allocated for hunting	Correlation coefficient			1.000	−0.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.197
	N			158	158
Visiting the tourist objectives and the surroundings the hunting area	Correlation coefficient				1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N				158

(Note: ** significant statistically for p -value < 0.05); Source: own calculations.

The results for Spain are presented in Table 5, and show that:

- There is a low to medium-intensity (0.332), statistically significant (p -value = 0.000) positive correlation between variables *occupational status* and *the importance of hunting in life*. This correlation may indicate that for those Spanish hunters who are retired person, unemployed, or employed with secondary education, hunting represents a passion, a form of life, or even the workplace.
- There is a low intensity (−0.226) statistically significant (p -value = 0.007) negative correlation between variables *the importance of hunting in life* and *what the Spanish*

hunters want to disappear from the world of hunting. These results could indicate that those Spanish hunters who work as hunters or hunting represent a passion consider that mischievous hunting and inappropriate weapons must disappear from the hunting world.

Table 5. Correlation coefficients for Spain.

		How Important Is Hunting in Your Life?	What Would You Do to Disappear from the World of Hunting?	Occupational Status
How important is hunting in your life?	Correlation coefficient	1.000	−0.226	0.332 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007	0.000
	N	140	140	140
What would you do to disappear from the world of hunting?	Correlation coefficient		1.000	−0.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.552
	N		140	140
Occupational status	Correlation coefficient			1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N			140

(Note: ** significant statistically for p -value < 0.05); Source: own calculations.

To test if there are statistically significant differences according to socio-demographic characteristics from Romania and Spain regarding the hunting data and hunters' opinions, we applied the chi-square bivariate test. The results of the first crosstab table are presented graphically in Figure 8.

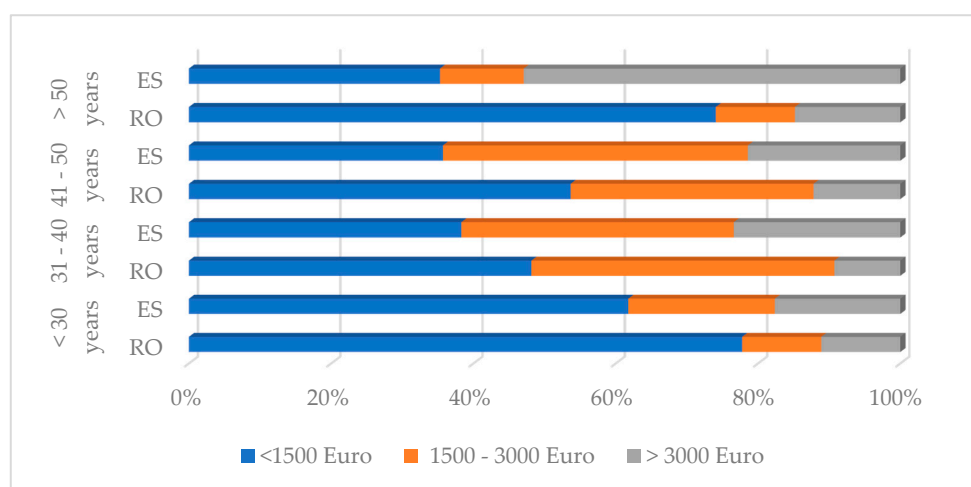


Figure 8. The distribution of hunters according to the age and annual budget for hunting.

The statistical results of the chi-square test are presented in Table 6, including the statistical hypotheses tested and test statistics (χ^2 calculated = Pearson Chi-Square, df = degree of freedom, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = p -value).

For the first hypothesis from the above table, both values of χ^2 calculated (for Romania $15.913 < 16.812$ and for Spain $15.760 < 16.812$) are smaller than the theoretical ones (from chi-square theoretical distribution table for six degrees of freedom and p -value = 0.01) so, the hypotheses may be accepted and, in conclusions, there are no statistically significant differences according to the hunters' age regarding the annual allocated budget for hunting for both Romanian and Spanish hunters.

For the second hypothesis from Table 6, for Romania, the value of χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 theoretical ($25.705 > 25.188$) so, we can reject the hypothesis for Romania and conclude that there are statistically significant differences according to the opinion

of society regarding the hunting referring to future direction of the hunting from the hunters' perspective. For Spain, the value of χ^2 calculated is smaller than χ^2 theoretical ($22.314 < 23.209$), therefore, we can accept the hypothesis, and, for Spain, there are no statistically significant differences according to the opinion of society regarding hunting referring to the future direction of hunting from the hunters' perspective.

The third hypothesis, the results from Table 6, show that both values of χ^2 calculated (for Romania $9.190 < 9.210$ and for Spain $13.538 < 13.816$) are smaller than the theoretical ones (from chi-square theoretical distribution table for 2 degrees of freedom and p -value = 0.01 and 0.001) so, the hypotheses can be accepted and, in conclusion, for Romania and Spain, there are no statistically significant differences according to permanently thinking of hunting (even before sleeping) regarding the habit of visiting the touristic objectives and the surroundings of the hunting area.

Table 6. The results and statistical hypotheses for the chi-square test.

	χ^2 Calculated		df		Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)		χ^2 Theoretical	
	RO	ES	RO	ES	RO	ES	RO	ES
1. Hypothesis H_0 : There are no statistically significant differences according to the hunters' age regarding the annual allocated budget for hunting.								
Pearson chi-square	15.913	15.760	6	6	0.014	0.015	16.812	16.812
2. Hypothesis H_0 : There are no statistically significant differences according to opinion of society regarding the hunting referring to future direction of the hunting from the hunters' perspective.								
Pearson chi-square	26.705	22.314	10	10	0.003	0.014	25.188	23.209
3. Hypothesis H_0 : There are no statistically significant differences according to permanently thinking to the hunting (even before sleeping) regarding the habit of visiting the touristic objectives and the surroundings of the hunting area.								
Pearson chi-square	9.190	13.538	2	2	0.010	0.001	9.210	13.816
4. Hypothesis H_0 : There are no statistically significant differences according to self-perception as hunter regarding the most important values in the hunting world.								
Pearson chi-square	35.710	49.705	15	12	0.002	0.000	35.628	32.209

Source: own calculations.

The last hypothesis tested from Table 6 shows that both for Romania and Spain, the values of χ^2 calculated (for Romania $35.710 > 35.628$ and for Spain $49.705 > 32.909$) are greater than the theoretical ones (from chi-square theoretical distribution table for 15 respectively 12 degrees of freedom and p -value = 0.002 respectively 0.000) so, the hypotheses must be rejected and, in conclusion, both for Romania and for Spain, there are statistically significant differences according to self-perception as a hunter regarding the most important values in the hunting world.

4. Discussion

Hunting is an activity with strong cultural roots that, in the 21st century, became a phenomenon with important social, economic, and spatial repercussions to become a real business [6]. Hunting tourism is a consequence of the changes that the practice of this ancestral activity has experienced over the centuries, as well as the increase in globalization, in which many activities are involved, including tourism. The progress that has taken place in terms of the means of transport, accessibility of territory, and a greater disposition of leisure and income have influenced the increase in the number of hunters over the years.

Nowadays, with the domination of the competitive market economy, in more and more countries, hunting is considered a distinct economic sector in the entire national economy, defined by object, subject, purpose, and method. An important contribution is also the emergence and development of companies specializing in hunting, whose clients are acquired through monographic fairs, through the internet, and/or hunting magazines.

According to these aspects, the present results offer important solutions, especially for Romania, to develop as a hunting destination by offering specific elements of the hunting tourism product [45].

Hunting is a renewable natural resource, of national and international interest, which is administered and managed to conserve wildlife biodiversity, maintain ecological balance, practice hunting, and meet other economic and social requirements. Furthermore, residents have a slightly positive attitude towards hunting when it is for tourism and economic purpose [14].

Most of the research results from the international literature are based on qualitative analysis, as follows:

- *Focus group discussions* with stakeholders and local households [19] or local communities [15,55];
- *ethnographic interviews* with business operators [6,61];
- community perspectives of empowerment from trophy hunting tourism [21];
- *semi-structured interviews* with community members by applying the empowerment theory to trophy hunting tourism [21], the Community-based natural resource management [56] or key stakeholders [13];
- *interviews* with a small number of Swedish hunters regarding the human–nonhuman animal relationship [50].

Our research results fill a gap in the international literature, being the first comparative quantitative analysis on Romanian and Spanish hunters. In the international literature, we identified only one comparative study, Finland and the USA, but using an auto-ethnographic study [61]. Moreover, the present study is one of the few to investigate hunters as tourists [62].

The Romanian and Spanish hunters from the samples self-identified as individuals who respect ethics and traditions, are animals' lovers, and are responsible and cautious; therefore, these results validate the sin of neutralization of eco-guilt [63] but are practically the first step to the *precautionary principle in hunting tourism planning* [63]. Regarding the specific tourism activities linked to the hunting activities, 76% of Romanian hunters and 75% of Spanish hunters declare the visiting of tourism objectives and the surrounding in the hunting area and these results validates the results of Martin-Delgado et al. [44] referring to the Spanish hunters in the protected area of Extremadura region [44].

Our results regarding what *hunters think in the current opinion of society about hunting* mostly validate the ambivalence of hunting among Finnish hunters [52].

Our results regarding the overall satisfaction and the special moment of hunting invalidate the results of Matejevic et al. [46], respectively, for Romanian and Spanish hunters; hunting is for *emotions and sentimental values* along with *the traditions and ethics of hunting* contrary to *trophy value of game* and "to shoot game" and the "opportunity to see" from a Serbian study [46].

For the present results, considering the research objectives regarding the *values of hunting for Romanian and Spanish hunters, their opinion for future of hunting, and the opinion of current society about hunting*, we can conclude that we validate, for Romania comparatively with Spain, the most important *principles of hunting tourism* [2]:

- The principle of biodiversity preservation in the animal and plant life of hunting grounds;
- the principle of ecologically sustainable balanced use of hunting resources for tourism purposes;
- the principle of observance of ethical norms and national traditions in the process of organizing hunting tourism;
- the principle of preservation of the cultural heritage in the areas, which are reserved for the organization of hunting tourism;
- the principle of promoting the development of alternative types of hunting tourism;
- the principle of integrating hunting tourism with hunting, forestry, and agrarian enterprises;

- the principle of state support in the development of hunting tourism.

Our results may have implications for the management of hunting tourism and trophy hunting both in Romania and Spain and offer a core result for similar regions that deserve further investigation and that complete the moral arguments concerning wildlife management and human well-being embedded in market relations and discourses on experiences [6] or to build a hunting tourism brand to achieve competitive advantages on the tourism market [42]. Moreover, the motivations of Romanian and Spanish hunters from the samples differentiate between regular hunters and hunting tourists [3] and it is still considered a traditional activity [49] providing cultural value from this activity [9]. From the economic perspective, according to FACE [64,65], rural areas need hunting as an additional driving economic factor.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, regarding the research objectives, the validation of research results from important worldwide studies demonstrates and confirms that among the values that identify hunting as an activity, Romanian and Spanish hunters highlight *human values* (friendship, company, ethics), *ecological values* (love of nature associated with hunting as a tool to understand and enjoy the natural environment), and *social values* (resources generated, hobby, effort). In addition, our respondents have the ability to self-criticize some components and aspects of hunting groups such as: *hunters without ethical code* (14% for Romanian hunters and 11% for the Spanish one), *local administration and politicians* (12% for Romania and 11% for Spain), persons with no respect for nature (9% for Romania and 11% for Spain). In general, most participants consider that society has a negative perception of hunting. Although, it is appropriate to make a clear distinction between the perception they experience from society regarding hunting tradition, associated with the rural environment, and those who do and do not know this tradition.

Regarding the development of hunting in general, and trophy hunting worldwide, particularly in Romania and in Spain, hunters believe that the future of this sector is moving towards commercial hunting, associated with purchasing power to ensure results. Even if the density of hunters is different across both countries, Romania and Spain being at opposite ends according to the data in Figure 1, Romania is in last place in Europe in 2017 with 60,000 hunters and Spain is in second place with 980,000 hunters, regardless of the nationality of the hunters, their values related to this sector are similar.

Based on the literature review and the present research results, we can conclude that there is a need for greater use of hunters as part of the tourism sector, better management of hunters pursuing quality at the expense of quantity. The role of hunters in environmental conservation is irreplaceable and the fact that the opinions of the Romanian and Spanish respondents are almost similar highlights the importance of mentioning the tradition in the rural area, the ethics of hunting activities in protected areas, and maintaining the values of hunting: emotions, feelings, ethics, and traditions (83% for Romanian hunters and 76% for Spanish hunters). Therefore, it is necessary to continue and strengthen agreements with conservation groups [66], with private entities that direct hunting tourists, so that society realizes that this activity does not harm the natural environment or the fauna that lives in it, but only favors it in terms of duration in time.

Our research has important theoretical and practical contributions to the existing literature, filling a gap in the international literature (especially for Europe) and being the first comparative quantitative analysis for two relatively different European countries, Romania and Spain. With these results, we demonstrated that Romania and Spain have an opposite position in Figure 1 regarding the numbers of hunters or different positions and preferences regarding trophy hunting. Overall, the values, opinions, and perceptions of Romanian and Spanish hunters are very similar.

The limits of the present research are linked to:

- The relatively low number of respondents (158 for Romania and 140 for Spain) comparatively with the number of hunters for both countries but especially for Spain (980,000 hunters in Spain in 2017 and 60,000 for Romania);
- the representativeness of the Romanian and Spanish hunters in the sampling;
- the sampling methods—a non-probabilistic method (convenience sampling) using an online questionnaire;
- the time of data collection, respectively, during the COVID-19 pandemic (April–May 2021) with many travel restrictions in both countries.

For future research, to deepen the analysis, we intend to develop the questionnaire with the following aspects: touristic areas visited, accommodation structures used, and the reasons for choosing the tourist area visited on a larger sample.

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