

ANALYSIS OF RURAL TOURIST RESOURCES FROM THE FAMOUS VILLAGES OF BRASOV COUNTY

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Abstract: The tourist potential of Brasov County combines elements of the natural setting with cultural and historical values. The objective of the research carried out is to analyze a representative tourist area for exceptional rural resources, having as a starting point the opinions of tourists expressed on one of the representative tourist sites, and based on the conclusions drawn to come up with future directions to support the area through tourism.

Key words: resources, vizibility, Brasov County, capitalization possibilities

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the only economic branch that capitalizes on natural potential and historical, cultural and artistic heritage [6,11,12,14]. The importance of tourist resources, as factor endowments, is justified only by their original or unique character, in which case the possessing country even acquires the "monopoly" position within a certain specialization. At the same time, a region that has important tourism resources but does not possess sufficient capital cannot develop its tourism production capacities with its own financial means, and its resources thus become underutilized. This is the situation of the majority of poorly developed countries, [3,9,13] in which the practice of importing capital, technology transfer and the need for international collaboration is observed. Rural tourism in the broadest sense can be translated by residential holidays in the countryside [5,10]. In a broad sense, rural tourism means the entire tourism exploitation of the rural world, which has the rural society as the recipient of its profit [4,7,8]. Thus, for rural areas, rural tourism is: both a factor of economic and social development, as well as an alternative for relaxation and preservation of traditions and customs.



Figure 1. Anthropogenic tourism resources on the territory of Brasov County

Brasov County has varied areas in terms of the tourist potential (monuments of nature, national parks), historical-archaeological sites [1,2].

Peasant fortresses represent a contribution that the medieval wall architecture of Transylvania entered into the European artistic heritage. This category includes the peasant fortresses with churches (Bod, Cincsor, Codlea, Cristian, Ghimbav, Halmeag, Maierus, Prejmer, Rotbav, Sanpetru), built by the Saxons and Romanians living in the respective villages in the 13th-16th centuries. Feldioara fortress (Marienburg fortress) - built by the Teutonic knights between 1211-1225 and then transformed in 1457 into a peasant fortress (now ruins). Under the walls of the fortress, the battle between the Moldavian armies of Petru Rares and those of Ferdinand I of Habsburg took place, ending with the victory of the Moldavians (1529). The fortress churches that are found in a significant number of villages (Beia, Bunesti, Cata, Cincu, Drauseni, Fiser, Homorod, Merchiasa, Mesendorf, Prejmer, Roades, Soars, Viscri). The best-preserved ones can be found in the localities of Harman - peasant fortress built in 1500 around the Romanesque church (1280), Feldioara Lutheran Church (XII-XV century), Halchiu, etc. The fortress/fortified churches of Prejmer and Viscri have been recognized as part of the UNESCO heritage. Other historical vestiges: Roman fort Pons Vetus (Hoghiz, ruins), Haller Castle (Hoghiz, 1553); The feudal castle of Racos (1625); Sambata de Sus Castle, 20 km southwest of Fagaras, built by the ruler of Wallachia, Constantin Brancoveanu, 1688-1714 (today ruins); The Sambata de Jos Castle, built in 1770 by Baron Brukenthal, governor of Transylvania, also presents tourist importance both through its architecture and through the natural landscape in which they are located. However, the promotion of these resources does not rise to the level of the potential they can offer. The most important tourist attraction, internationally recognized is the Bran Castle through the legend of Dracula.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological approach involves a combination of methods from the collection of information from secondary sources, already existing with the collection of primary information through studies carried out within the area under study. Three representative tourist centers from Brasov County were analyzed: Moieciu, Fundata and Viscri, based on the opinions of tourists expressed on www.tripadvisor.com. [15] Based on the conclusions drawn, future directions were issued to support the tourism development of the area.

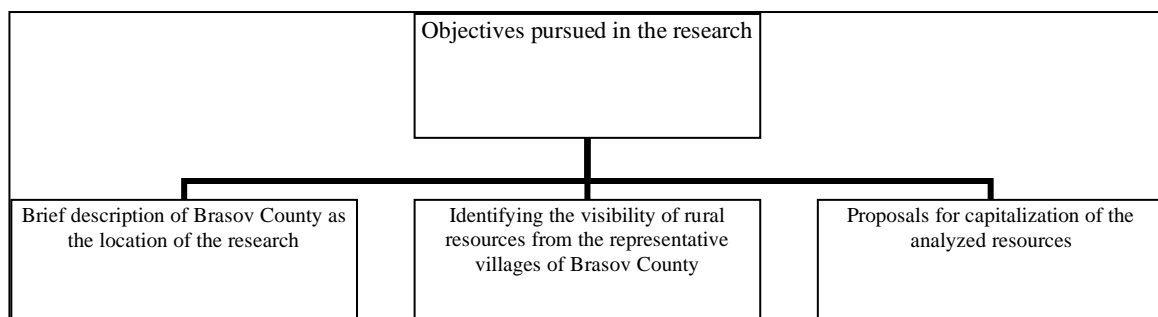


Figure 2. Objectives pursued in the research

RESEARCH RESULTS

1. The visibility of the specific resources of Moieciu commune

The surroundings of Moieciu commune satisfy multiple tourist needs: from relaxation to various historical or thematic tours. On the website that was the basis of this research from a statistical point of view, by far the most opinions are centered on Bran Castle, but there are also other interesting objectives that are the emblem of the places.

Evaluation of Bran Castle visibility. Bran Castle is one of the most famous landmarks from Transylvania and is known as the home of Count Dracula. There are 6120 appreciations from tourists for this objective. From the total appreciations, 4102 are classified as excellent and very good. However, there are also a number of 708 reviews that place this tourist objective in the weak and negative categories, the motivations of the tourists' sanctions being diverse: from the rather long waiting time during the tourist season, to the high rates, or the lack of guides and related explanations during the visit, "the reduced presence of aspects that link the castle to Vlad Dracula", or unfortunately inadequate treatment.

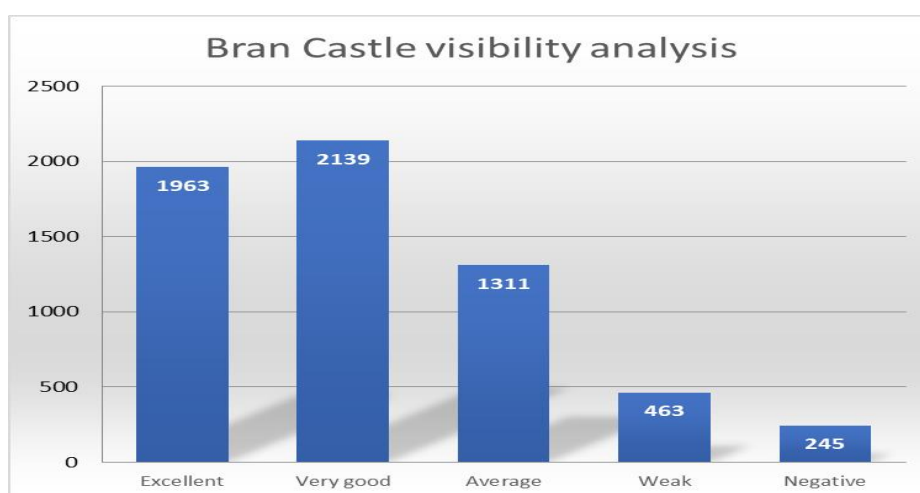


Figure 3. Evaluation of Bran Castle visibility

Day trips through Moieciu and its surroundings can be a way to combine local resources.

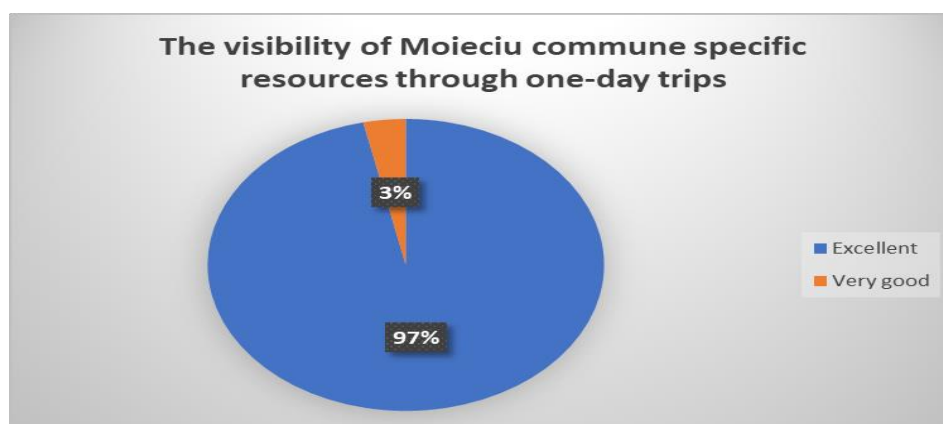


Figure 4. The visibility of Moieciu commune specific resources through one-day trips

The combination of different categories of resources (natural, artisanal, etc.) under the form of day trips through Moieciu and its surroundings (Brasov, Rasnov, Bran, Zarnesti, Piatra Craiului, Fundata and Cheile Gradistei) led visitors to take a closer look at

life in the countryside. There are 29 appreciations in the excellent and very good category for day trips, the visits to the Image House, the special natural landscapes and the visits to the families from the area either for tasting the gastronomic products or for the traditional activities of weaving, sewing, are positively appreciated.

The visibility of the Village Museum from Bran-Moieciu area. Perhaps the most authentic perspective on how people lived in the past and more importantly on how a traditional Romanian village functioned is reflected by the Village Museum from Bran-Moieciu area. Its purpose is to show in one place the types of houses from the analyzed area and the very interesting collection of furniture, porcelain and painting from past times.

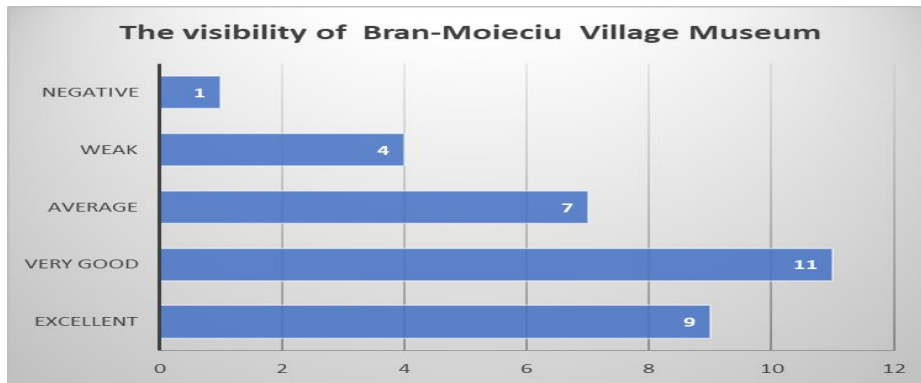


Figure 5. The visibility of Bran-Moieciu Village Museum

From those 32 reviews on the site considered in the research, 65% are reviews placed in the excellent and very good categories. However, there are 5 reviews, which represent 15% of the total reviews considered to be negative reviews, deriving from the inappropriate behavior of the staff or the high waiting time during the tourist season.

Visibility status of the Palamari Cultural Center. The Palamari cultural center is another tourist attraction that combines several categories of tourist resources: natural, cultural, ethno-folkloric. There are 18 appreciations on Tripadvisor, the extraordinary hospitality, the gastronomic products and the involvement were the elements that the tourists appreciated positively.

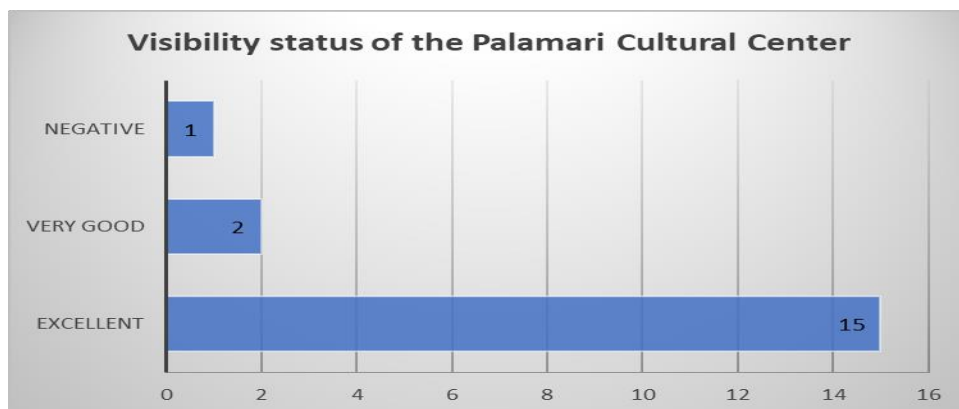


Figure 6. Visibility status of the Palamari Cultural Center

2. Analysis of specific resources from Fundata-Rasnov area

Fundata commune stands out for the special landscapes conferred by the settlement at the highest altitude in our country, through 3 component villages, one of which (Sirnea) is considered to be the first tourist village from the country.

Evaluation of Zarnesti Gorges visibility. For nature lovers, Zarnesti Gorges area is a way to combine many pleasant resources. There are a number of 151 appreciations from

tourists, 81 being classified as excellent and very good, being appreciated for the beautiful landscapes, clean air, cold water, the existence of explanatory panels and indicators.

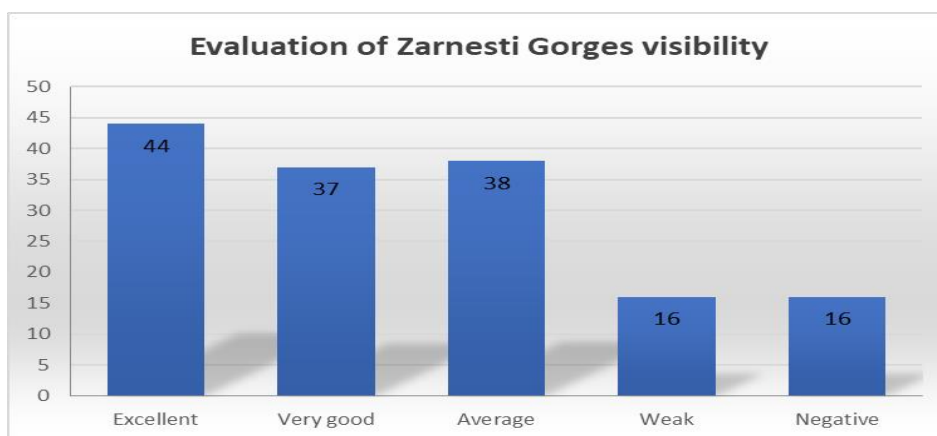


Figure 7. Evaluation of Zarnesti Gorges visibility

The Rasnov Fortress is one of the most important local monuments from the area under study. From the total of 1092 tourist reviews posted on www.tripadvisor.com, 837 are excellent and very good reviews. A number of 83 tourists' reviews are placed in the weak and negative category, the motivations being related to the fact that there are no organized tours with guides to highlight the history of the citadel, the monument is under renovation, so tourists cannot see the inside of the citadel, the lack of parking spaces, etc.

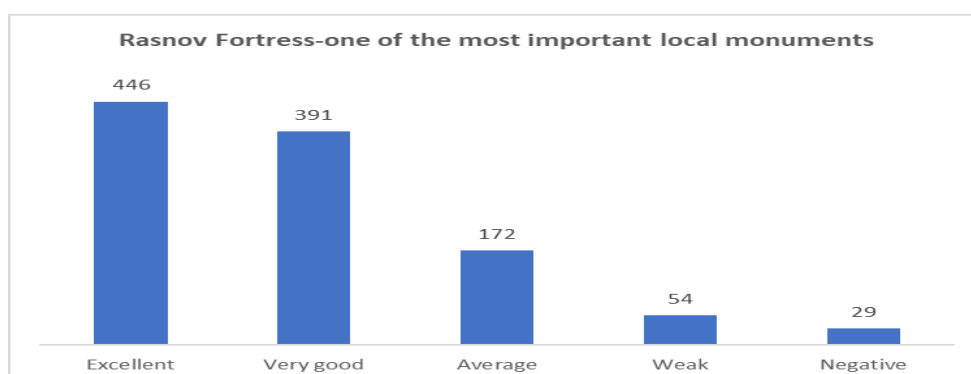


Figure 8. Rasnov Fortress-one of the most important local monuments

Dino Park - emblematic resource of the area. Also in this area we find another representative objective: Dino Parc. Dino Parc, situated in Rasnov, is the largest dinosaur theme park from Eastern Europe, a unique and special project in our country. As far as concerning the visibility in the eyes of tourists, Dino Parc totaled 318 appreciations on the considered site, 87% being classified as excellent and very good. There is also a smaller percentage of negative reviews and it derives from: the long waiting time during the peak tourist season, the behavior of the staff, or the lack of tourist explanations.

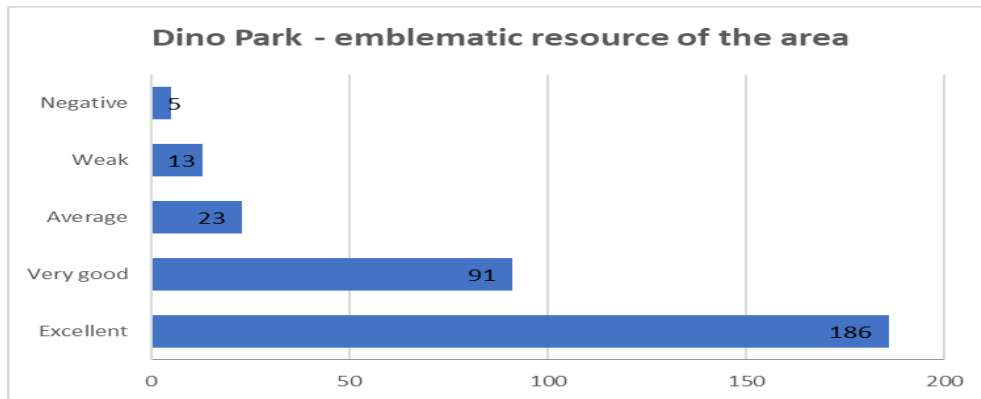


Figure 9. Dino Park - emblematic resource of the area

3. Presentation of emblematic resources from Bunesti-Viscri area

From Bunesti commune, perhaps the most famous village is Viscri, thanks to the fierce promotion generated by Prince Charles. According to the way of organization, the site that is the basis of our research, organizes local resources grouped according to the three elements of the tourist product: accommodation, places to serve meals, various leisure possibilities. On each of the mentioned elements, there are different assessments from the tourists. The village provides resources for all three elements of the tourism product, and the Viscri tourism product is a 100% genuine one. From the total existing reviews, 83% are placed in the excellent and very good categories.

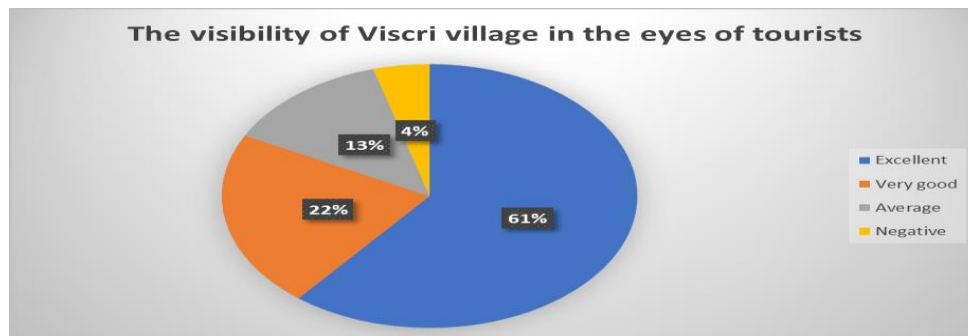


Figure 10. The visibility of Viscri village in the eyes of tourists

From the existing resources, the fortified church from Viscri is the one that attracted the most part of the reviews, 332 in number, 95% being placed in the excellent and very good categories. There are also a number of 7 appreciations placed in the weak and negative categories, tourists being generally dissatisfied by the behavior of the staff.



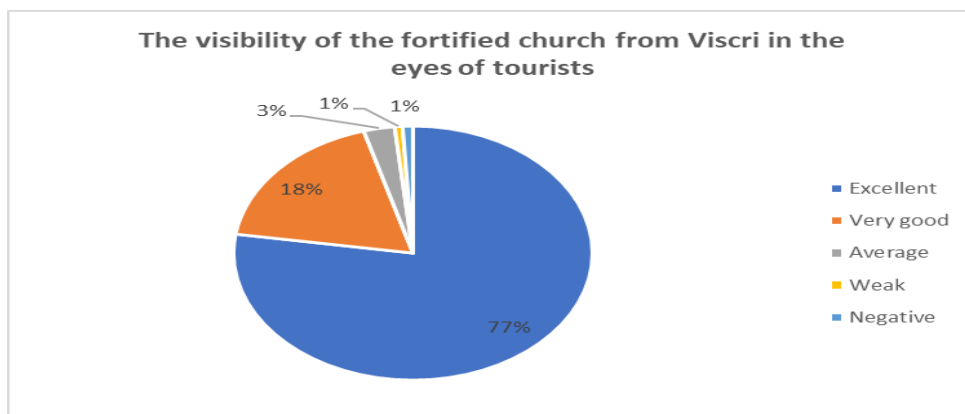


Figure 11. The visibility of the fortified church from Viscri in the eyes of tourists

Another tourist resource in the immediate vicinity of the village of Viscri is *Rupea Fortress*. It was built on the ruins of a former Dacian defense fort conquered by the Romans. From the 258 tourist reviews for the Rupea Fortress, 212 are in the excellent and very good categories. There are also weaker or negative reviews and generally sanction the absence of additional explanations, or informative plaques, or the involvement of the authorities in the restoration.

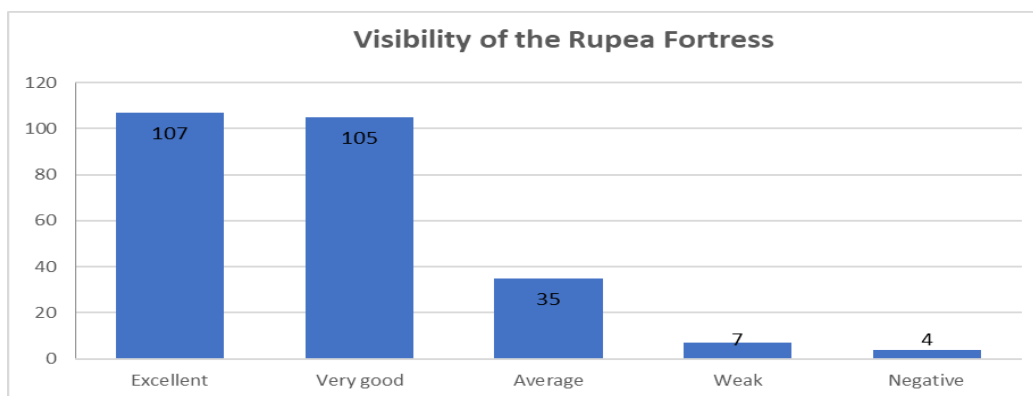


Figure 12. Visibility of the Rupea Fortress

4. Proposals for capitalization of the analyzed resources

The area under study already has a certain tourist visibility, as it appears from the study carried out starting from the information found on one of the most representative tourist sites. But obviously there is place for better, therefore three priority directions should be followed in support of efforts to capitalize on tourism activities:

- Increasing the visibility of the area through SMART partnerships between tourist structures from the area and tourism operators;
- Creating original tourist products, based on consumer requirements, with an emphasis on highlighting local resources and products;
- Attracting the locals in "telling the story of the area" and more attention to the development of the tourist activity.

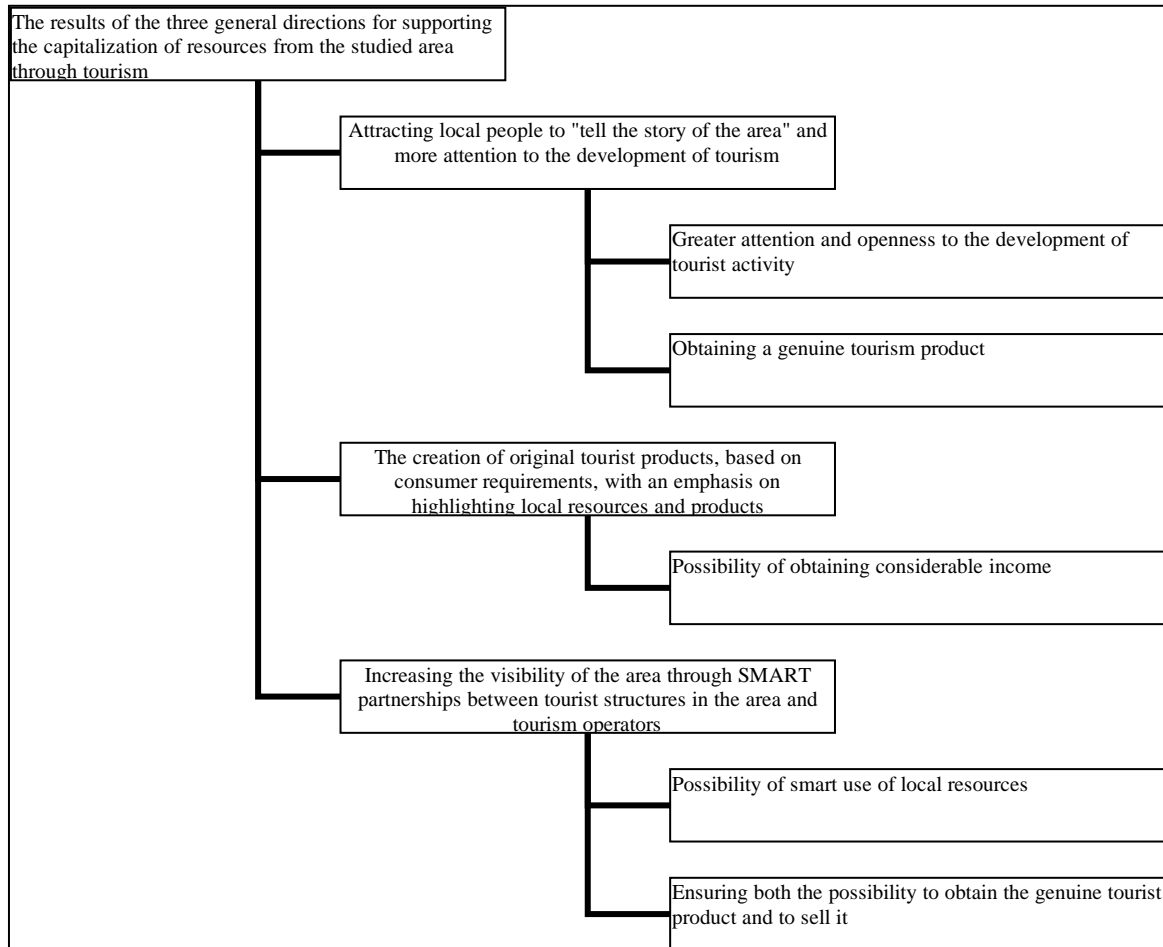


Figure 13. The results of the three general directions to support the capitalization of resources from the studied area through tourism

The results of these three general directions of supporting the exploitation of resources in the studied area through tourist activities are beneficial from all points of view for the area.

CONCLUSIONS

The surroundings of Moieciu commune satisfy multiple tourist needs: from relaxation to various historical or thematic tours. On the site that was the basis of our research from a statistical point of view, by far the richest number of opinions centralize the Bran Castle, the Bran Village Museum, the Palamari Cultural Center and the combination of different categories of resources (natural, artisanal, etc.) under the form of day trips through Moieciu and its surroundings (Brasov, Rasnov, Bran, Zarnesti, Pietra Craiului, Fundata and Cheile Gradistei). Fundata commune stands out for the special landscapes conferred by the settlement at the highest altitude in our country, through 3 component villages, one of which (Sirnea) is considered to be the first tourist village in the country. To this one are added: Zarnesti Gorges from Fundata, Rasnov Citadel, Dino Park - emblematic resource of the area. From Bunedti commune, perhaps the most famous village is Viscri, thanks to the fierce promotion generated by Prince Charles.

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