

## VISIBILITY OF REPRESENTATIVE TOURIST RESOURCES FROM MARAMURES AREA-DISTINCTIVE ANALYSIS BY OBJECTIVES

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**Abstract:** *Maramures rural tourism mainly groups accommodation and meal services, and to a lesser extent, in an organized manner, other types of services, such as carriage rides, sleigh rides, horseback riding, etc., but those who choose the Maramures countryside for spending the holiday have the opportunity to get to know the traditional activities of the household, the customs and traditions carried out on the occasion of various events and significant moments in the life of the Maramures peasant, without these being organized intentionally for tourist purposes. The objective of this research is to make an analysis regarding the visibility of these resources, in the eyes of tourists, using [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) and the opinions expressed by tourists here as a basis for analysis.*

**Key words:** *Maramures rural area, objective, distinctive analyze*

### INTRODUCTION

The services offered to tourists accommodated in rural areas [9,7] are reduced, in most cases being limited to basic services, accommodation and meals, auxiliary services, secondary offers, missing or present in a very small number. The modern tourist does not only want accommodation and meals, but he also wants a varied range of activities that will make him feel good. The individual character of each Maramures region and subregion gives specific and special features to the offered tourist products.

The quality and variety of the landscape [11] is not enough to satisfy the tourist. Its satisfaction is dependent on several varied factors, but the most important is the provision of an appropriate accommodation, access and leisure infrastructure[14]. We note with regret that the material base is outdated, the infrastructure is degraded, and the quality of services is often inadequate. The desolating image is often completed by the low standard of public catering services in terms of general appearance, atmosphere, quality and variety of dishes, staff behavior or inappropriate music. In conclusion, the quality of tourist services is far below the standards that tourists are used to, especially those who have experience from outside the country or come from Western countries.

The presence of a diversified tourist offer with a high degree of tourist attractiveness is what calibrates the size, intensity and diversity of tourist flows, as well as their orientation in the territory, implicitly the economic efficiency of tourism [7,8] in the County. The implementation of programs related to the traditional occupations of the locals intended for tourists are multi-effective: for the tourist, who comes into contact with the Maramures rural reality through participation, for the provider and/or the producer of the program, economic benefits, for the rural society, the continuity of crafts and occupations, and for tourism, the promotion and continuity of its long-term development.

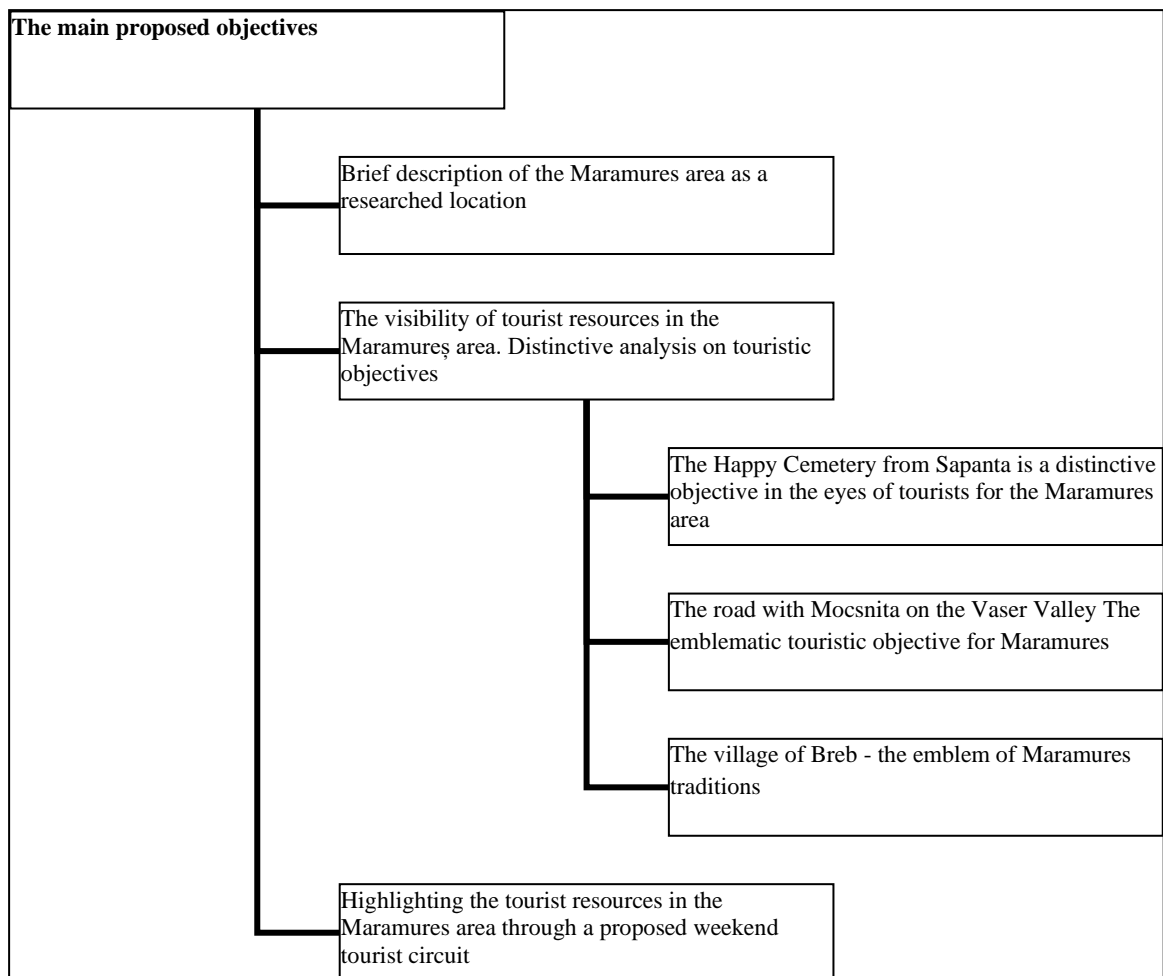
Along with the basic tourist resources (tourist attractions, material and leisure base), the staff involved in rural tourism greatly influence the achievement of special stays in rural accommodation units [10,12]. The professionalism of the staff can attract or, on the contrary, repel potential tourists.

The human factor is decisive in ensuring the quality of the provision of tourist services, therefore the qualification of the human resource active in this field is essential. The population represents a component, active or passive, essential in the proper development of rural tourism. What would the village represent without population? How

would there be rural tourism without the main actors from the countryside? They are simple questions, but they highlight the importance of the local population for the existence and development of tourism in the rural environment[1,2]. Even in a region without a rich heritage, rural tourism can be practiced, [5,4] if extraordinary human resources are found to balance the lack of natural [3,13] or anthropic attractiveness, led by an exceptional leader.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area taken for analysis is a special one, from the point of view of existing tourist resources, successfully supporting the development of tourist activity.



**Figure 1. The main proposed objectives**

The objective of this research is to make an analysis regarding the visibility of these resources, in the eyes of tourists, using [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) and the opinions expressed by tourists here as a basis for analysis. Thus, we took into account the most famous/representative tourist attractions in the area, the purpose of the research carried out in this research being to identify:

- The Happy Cemetery from Sapanta - distinctive objective in the eyes of tourists when we talk about Maramures;
- The road with Mocanita on Valea Vaserului - emblematic tourist objective for Maramures
- The way Breb Village is perceived - the emblem of Maramuresian traditions.

Once the tourists' opinions have been identified, the proposal follows the

highlighting of the tourist resources in the Maramures area through a weekend tourist circuit.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### 1. Happy Cemetery from Sapanta-distinctive objective in the eyes of tourists when we talk about Maramures

From all the regions from Romania, Maramures is usually considered the most closely related to the traditional "peasant" lifestyle. An example of the resources of this expression can be found in Sapanta. Located not far from Sighetul Marmăției, Sapanta has become an objective on the tourist map of the country, interesting to visit, thanks to the famous Happy Cemetery with its large wooden crosses, which describe in a novelistic way the life and characteristics of the people who are buried here.

Begun in 1935 by local artist Stan Ioan Patras, the cemetery contains over 800 uniquely carved oak crosses; each of this contains a whimsical saying and an image above documenting the life of the deceased. A visit to the small souvenir shop on site and the many stalls outside can complete the tourist's experience and memories once here.



The more than 800 wooden crosses bear the life stories and final moments of the bodies they mark. The painted wooden crosses display simple images and are annotated with stories about the villagers. Most of the crosses are realized by the local artist Stan Ioan Patraa, who began carving clever or ironic poems about the deceased, painting the image of the deceased and often including a story about how the person died.

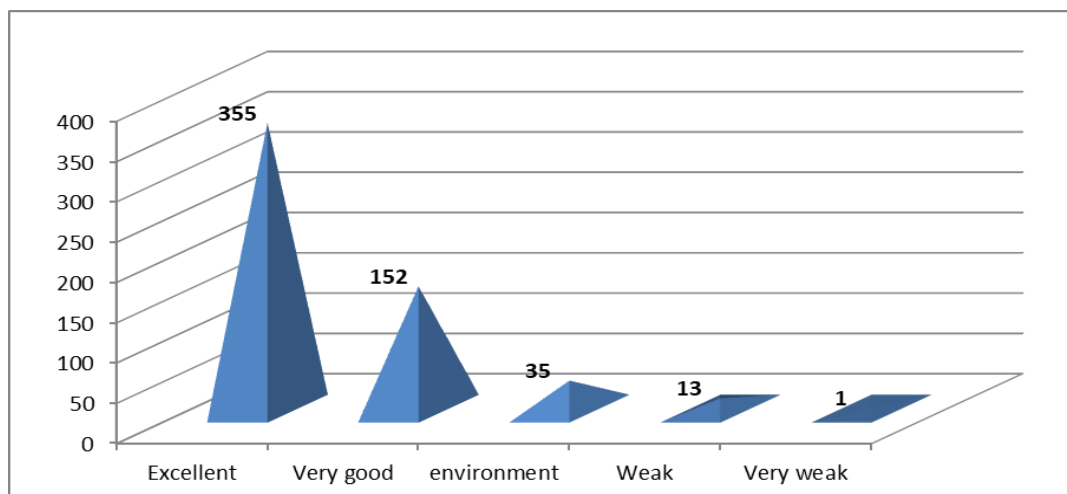


Unlike most cemeteries which are tedious and silent, this cemetery celebrates the life and individual weaknesses of each villager. The colors are symbolic: green represents life, yellow for fertility, red for passion, black for death. The colors are set on a deep blue (known as Sapanta blue) representing hope, freedom and the sky. Other symbols may appear—white doves for the soul, a blackbird representing a tragic or suspicious death—or an image that reflects Patras' dark sense of humor.

On [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) there are 556 reviews made by tourists who visited this objective.

From the 556 reviews made by tourists for this tourist objective, 63.84% are reviews placed in the "excellent" category, 33.63% are reviews placed in the "very good and average" category. A percentage of 2.51 of the existing reviews are in the "weak and very weak" category.

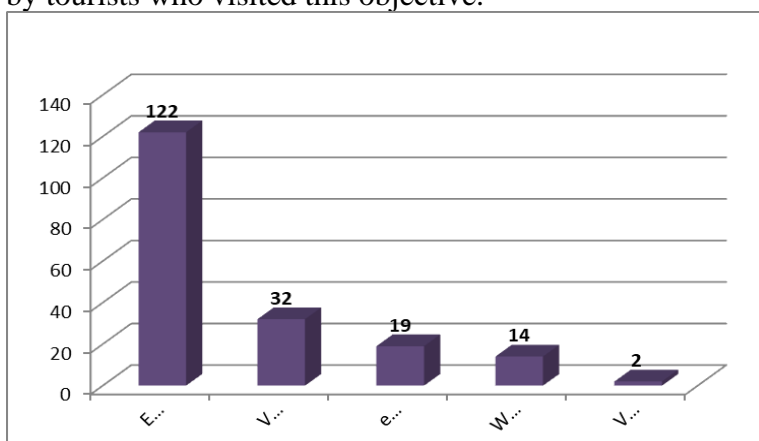
The fact is that this is a cemetery like no other and it is different because of a man who started it all, with time thanks to this initiative, placing the area on the tourist map of the country and the world.



**Figure 2. Placement by category of the reviews made by tourists for the Happy Cemetery in Sapanta**

**2. The road with Mocanita on Valea Vaserului - emblematic tourist objective for Maramures**

Initially, the main purpose of Mocanita train was to transport wood from the forests of Maramures. Later, this forest steam locomotive, among the last in the world, was given another alternative, the one of capitalizing through tourist activities, both of it and the special landscapes from Vaser Valley. In last years, there has been an enormous increase in interest for Mocanita train, the tourists who arrive here considering it "an unforgettable experience". The route takes about 5.5 hours, with two breaks, the view is spectacular, ensuring a cultural immersion and keeping alive the forest railways of Maramures, with open cars for a maximum experience in a simple land, capitalizing on the wonderful landscape of the Vaser Valley. On [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) can be found 280 reviews made by tourists who visited this objective.



**Figure 2. Placement by category of the reviews made by tourists for the road with Mocanita train**

**Table 1. Placement by category of the reviews made by tourists for the road with Mocanita train**

Excellent	122
Very good	32
environment	19
Weak	14
Very weak	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>

Source: processing after [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)



Out of the 280 reviews, 122 are in the "excellent" category, 32 in the "very good" category, 35 in the "average, poor and very poor" category. The negative reviews derive from the long-time interval of the rides, the long waiting time to purchase tickets and the high costs of the products that can be purchased during the ride.

### 3. Breb village - the emblem of Maramures traditions

Seen as a whole, the traditional peasant household, falls into the type of households with double courtyard. Each space in the household is occupied by a construction with a special purpose.

The Maramures village, until the first decades of our century, was under the sign of the "wooden civilization". All the components, from the entrance gate to the house, were made of wood, as well as the mills, the mills, the mills and the oil mills, but also the administrative constructions. Grave markers - crosses - and boundary markers were also made of wood, and as a synthesis of the peasant creative genius, the Maramures churches were also built of wood. Entering in a peasant house today, tourist will be amazed by the abundance of textile products all kinds, more and more colorful, modern furniture mixed with traditional pieces, enameled dishes with brightly colored motifs, in essence, an amalgam of old and new. The traditional peasant interior conditioned by socio-economic factors, ethnopsychological, geoclimatic was and is subject to the need for renewal. We must note that the sign of the social category was not given by the size of the rooms of the house, but by the size and the number of outbuildings in the household, which were relevant for the wealth in animals, land.

Breb village from Maramures is one of the many authentic Romanian villages that still reflect the traditional, rustic lifestyle. Breb is the kind of place, in traditional style, with the kind of people that will stay in the tourist's mind and heart forever.

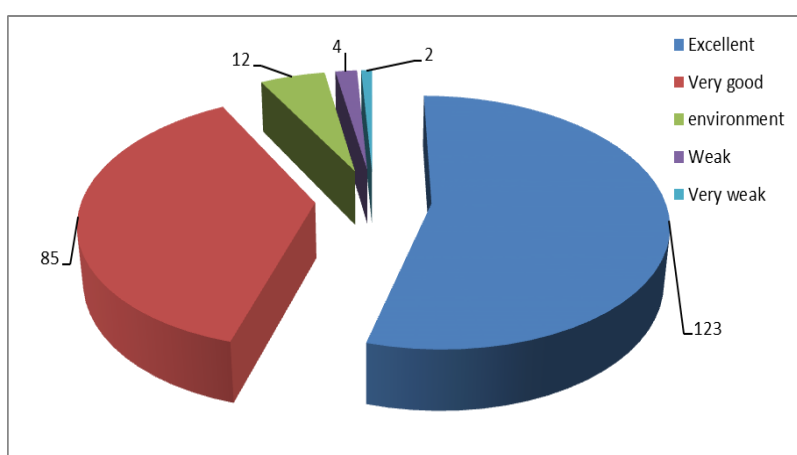


The traditional is at home here, reflected by the beautiful wooden gates, the traditional households, the popular port and the traditional food, moreover these are also the strong points identified by tourists (especially foreigners) and at the same time the ones that the area brought the village out of anonymity.

Once here the tourist has the opportunity to see and participate in the traditional way of life, traditions and local crafts (spinning, weaving, carpentry, crafts).



On [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) can be found 226 reviews made by tourists who visited this objective.



**Figure 3. Placement by category of the reviews made by tourists for Breb village**

**Table 2. Placement by category of the reviews made by tourists for Breb village**

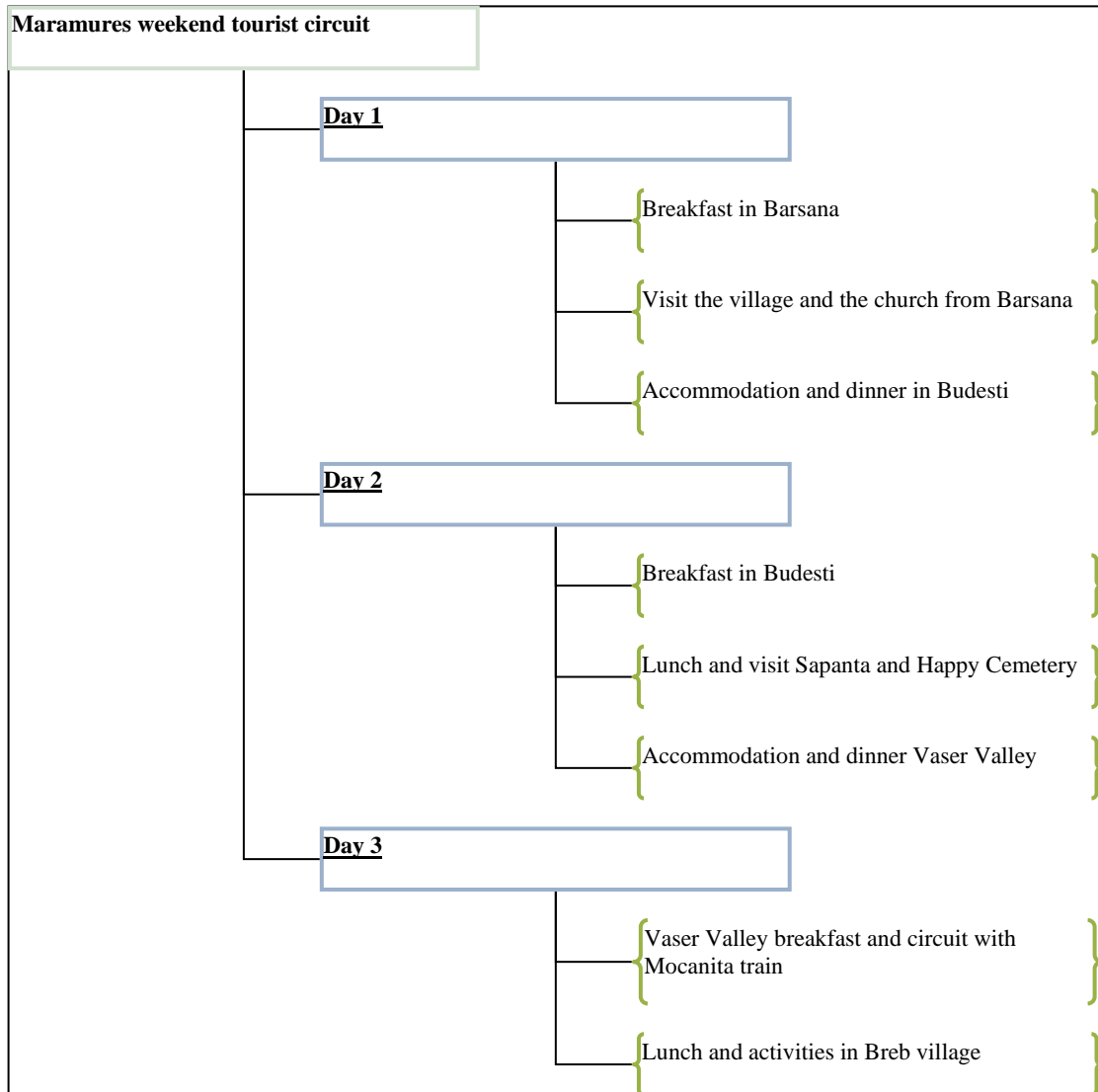
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Very good</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>environment</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Weak</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Very weak</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>

Source: processing after [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

From the total reviews made by tourists, a percentage of 92.03% falls into the "very good and excellent" category and 2.65% into the "poor and very poor" category, the motivation of the poor reviews deriving from the poor access infrastructure and from the insufficiency of services.

That the area chosen for study is a beautiful one is a certainty, but even if in some places are known on the domestic and international tourist market, there is room for improvement when we discuss of the ways of capitalizing it. As an opportunity to get to know as many local resources as possible, in the shortest possible time, we believe that the circuit type tourist product is the most appropriate.

Thus, starting from the premise of free time, in order to ensure the accessibility of those wishing to this tourist product, we chose the weekend period, the duration being three days. During the three days we tried to combine as many possibilities as possible so that it is possible to know as many tourist resources as possible.



**Figure 4. Maramures weekend tourist circuit-Proposal**

**Day 1**

- Breakfast Barsana
- Visit the village and the church from Barsana. The quality of the interior paintings is one of the reasons why the church here is considered by many to be the most beautiful church from Maramures. The colors of white, red, blue and gold dominate the portrayal of religious scenes, with influences from the Baroque style.
- Budesti accommodation and dinner.

**Day 2**

- Budesti breakfast
- Lunch and visit Sapanta and Happy Cemetery. Unlike most cemeteries in the world, the Happy Cemetery from Sapanta has a unique approach of death, seeing it as a celebration of a life that has ended, rather than a tragic event. It all started in the 1930s when Stan Ion Patras carved his first oak cross. Each cross from the cemetery is painted in a special shade of blue, now known as "Sapanta blue" and decorated with traditional motifs. On the cross, there is also an image, meant to illustrate a personality aspect or significant scene from the life of the

deceased, and a short poem. One of the most famous crosses in the cemetery is the one of Stan Ion Patras, who died in 1977.

- Valea Vaserului accommodation and dinner.

### **Day 3**

- Breakfast in Vaser Valley and circuit with the Mocanita. One of the only fully functional narrow-gauge steam trains from Europe, Mocanita certainly offers a fairytale experience. The train departs from Viseu de Sus and heads deep into the beautiful Vaser Valley, crossing the Natural Park of the Maramures Mountains. The views are amazing – the train passes through green forests, steep cliffs and clear waters.
- Lunch in Breb and activities in the village. Breb village is special and in the same time a representative place for defining rural areas characteristics, some of its stunning aspects for modern tourist could be: wooden houses, an old church, nice people and a famous craftsmen, the wood sculptor Petru Pop. Thus tourist can see here: the local culture on a walk through the village, meeting the locals and hearing their stories and participating in traditional activities such as working the land or picking vegetables from the garden.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As they say, some places are meant not only to be seen with the eyes, but also to be felt with the heart. Such a place is Maramures. There is no better place than Maramures to discover authentic Romania, as people still keep their traditions and customs passed down from generation to generation. In this research, we took into account the most famous/representative tourist attractions in the area, the purpose of the research carried out being to identify:

- The Happy Cemetery from Sapanta - distinctive objective in the eyes of tourists when we talk about Maramures. Of the 556 reviews made by tourists for this tourist objective, 63.84% are reviews placed in the "excellent" category, 33.63% are reviews placed in the "very good and average" category. A percentage of 2.51 of the existing reviews are in the "weak and very weak" category.

- The road with Mocanita on the Vaser Valley - emblematic tourist objective for Maramures. Out of the 280 reviews, 122 are in the "excellent" category, 32 in the "very good" category, 35 in the "average, poor and very poor" category.

- The way Breb Village is perceived - the emblem of Maramures traditions. Of the total reviews made by tourists, a percentage of 92.03% falls into the "very good and excellent" category and 2.65% into the "poor and very poor" category, the motivation of the poor reviews deriving from the poor access infrastructure and partly from the insufficiency of services.

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