

TOURIST DESTINATION IMAGE AND SATISFACTION AT PELEȘ CASTLE: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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***Abstract:** This study provides a descriptive analysis of the tourism destination image and tourist satisfaction associated with Peleș Castle, a significant cultural and historical landmark in Romania. Using survey data collected from visitors, the study explores perceptions of the castle's image, focusing on visitor services, and examines how these factors contribute to overall tourist satisfaction. Through the identification of key aspects that shape visitors' experiences, this research aims to offer insights into maintaining and enhancing the appeal of Peleș Castle as a prominent tourist destination. The findings contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate regarding the elements influencing tourist satisfaction in cultural heritage tourism and suggest strategies for improving visitor experiences*

***Key words:** destination image, tourist satisfaction, cultural heritage tourism, visitor experience, Peleș Castle*

INTRODUCTION

Peleș Castle, situated in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania, stands as one of the country's most important cultural and historical landmarks. The beautiful scenery around the castle along with its rich cultural heritage, makes Peleș Castle one of the most frequented tourist spots in Romania. [3,8,12] The castle, inaugurated in 1883, was a marvel of architectural design and modern amenities for its time, offering running water, electricity, and central heating. [8] This was the summer residence of King Carol I, the castle is renowned for its stunning architecture, extensive art collections, and rich historical significance.

Today, it serves not only as a monument to Romania's royal heritage but also as a major tourist destination that draws both domestic and international visitors together with other attractions from Romania [1-5,9]. Despite its prominence, there has been limited research focusing on the destination image of Peleș Castle and its impact on tourist satisfaction. The concept of destination image encompasses the perceptions and impressions that visitors hold about a place, which can significantly influence their decision-making processes and overall travel experiences [1,6,7,10-15]. Tourist satisfaction, meanwhile, reflects how well the actual experience meets or exceeds visitor expectations, affecting their likelihood of returning or recommending the destination to others [6,7,10,11-15]. By prioritizing visitor satisfaction and carefully managing the destination image, Peleș Castle can continue to preserve its cultural significance while remaining an attractive destination for future generations of tourists. Additionally, targeted marketing strategies could help to increase both domestic and international tourist visits by emphasizing the rich cultural history and unique attractions of the castle. [2]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive study aims to analyze the tourism destination image and tourist satisfaction associated with Peleș Castle. Utilizing survey data collected from visitors, the research explores perceptions of the castle's image, with a particular focus on visitor services such as guided tours, amenities, and staff interactions. The study examines how

these factors contribute to overall tourist satisfaction and identifies key aspects that shape visitors' experiences. By focusing on various aspects of the castle, such as its architectural beauty, historical importance, and natural surroundings, this study aims to uncover how these elements shape tourists' perceptions and their level of satisfaction. [6] Understanding these factors is crucial for enhancing the visitor experience and ensuring the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Romania. [10]

RESEARCH RESULTS

One of the key traits of the tourism destination image of Peleş Castle as reported by the respondents are the historical importance and the architecture of the castle. [9]

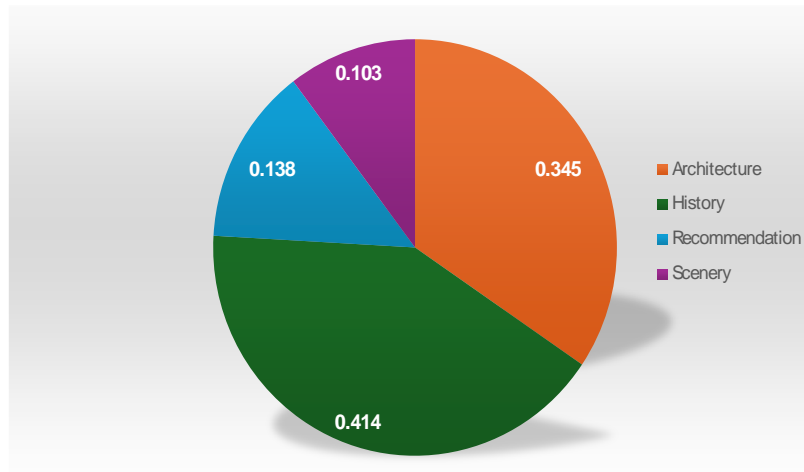


Figure 1. Reasons for visiting

Source: Own work, 2024

Visitors are mainly drawn to the castle's history (41%) and architecture (35%), with recommendations and scenery each contributing with 14% and 10%. The castle is highly regarded for its historical and architectural appeal, with minor areas for improvement to enhance satisfaction further (Figure 1).

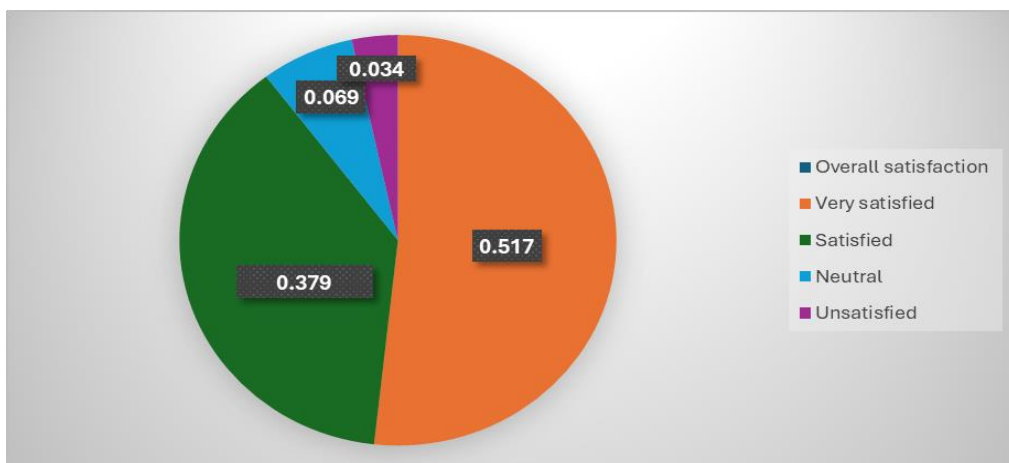


Figure 2. Overall satisfaction

Source: Own work, 2024

90% of visitors to Peles Castle are satisfied, with 38% completely satisfied and 52% satisfied, while 7% are neutral and 3% unsatisfied (Figure 2).

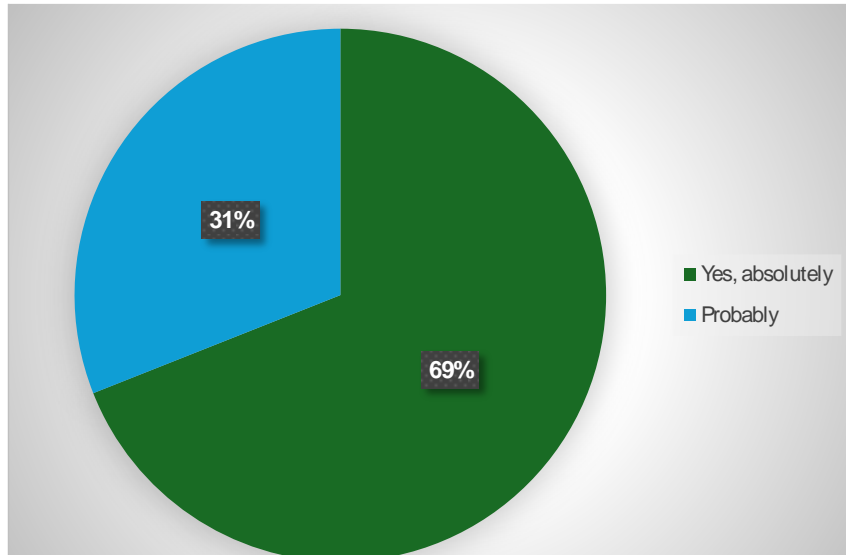


Figure 3. Likelihood to recommend

Source: Own work, 2024

100% will recommend the castle, with 69% would do it absolutely and 31% probably (Figure 3).

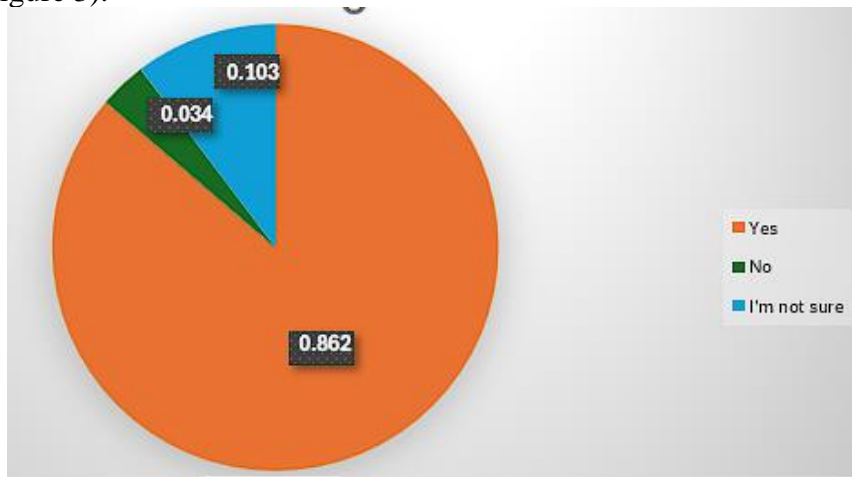


Figure 4. Comparison with other objectives

Source: Own work, 2024

The data reveals that 86.20% of respondents indicated they would return, demonstrating a high level of visitor satisfaction and strong appeal of the destination. This majority highlights the castle's ability to create a memorable and positive experience for its visitors. (Figure 4)

In comparison, only 3.40% of respondents stated that they would not come back. This low percentage may suggest that only a small group of visitors found their experience unsatisfactory, or that they felt one visit was sufficient to fully explore and appreciate the site.

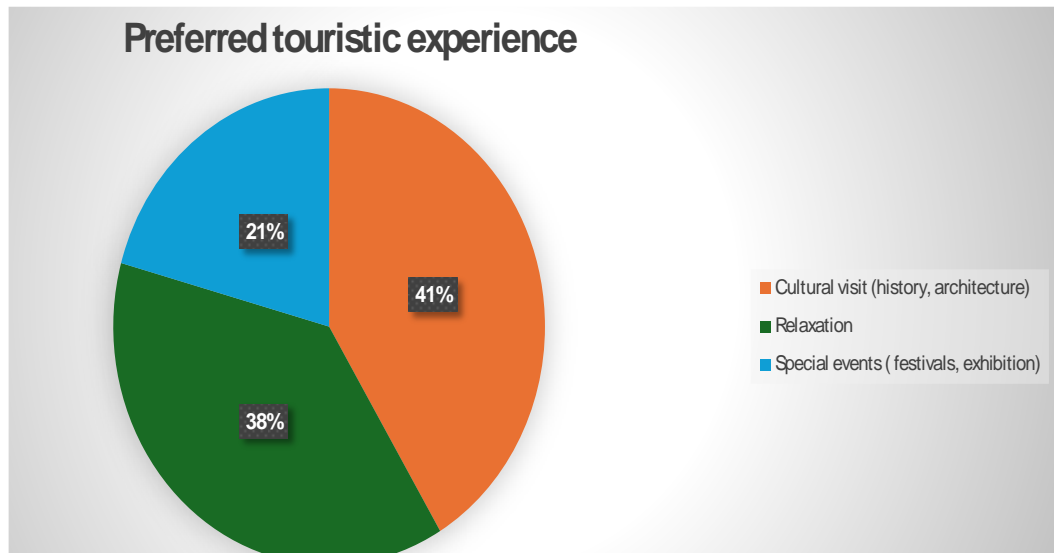


Figure 6. Preferred touristic experience

Source: Own work, 2024

Visitors primarily prefer cultural visits (41%) focused on history and architecture, followed by relaxation (38%) and special events like festivals and exhibitions (21%).

The majority of visitors (86.2%) expressed a strong likelihood of returning, with only 3.4% indicating they would not and 10.3% remaining unsure. This demonstrates a high level of satisfaction and a strong intent to revisit the destination.

CONCLUSIONS

Peles Castle is a highly regarded destination, attracting visitors primarily for its cultural significance and relaxing environment. The castle has a very heavy history of culture as a site and that tends to really improve opinions about the people who visit it. [5] Most visitors are satisfied with their experience, rating the castle better than other locations.

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