

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PERCEPTION OF TOURISTS ON THE TOURIST POTENTIAL IN CARAȘ-SEVERIN COUNTY

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Abstract. *The tourist potential of an area is the whole of its natural, cultural, socio-economic components, and besides these components, an important factor in the tourism potential is represented by the tourism specific infrastructure as well as the human factor. Besides capitalizing on the tourism potential, the development of tourism in a certain area must also take into account the perception of the tourists. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the tourist potential of Caraș-Severin County and to find the opinion of the tourists about it. The study carried out in this paper highlights both the tourism potential of the Caras-Severin County and the problems that underlie its insufficient capitalization.*

Key words: *tourism, services, tourist potential, tourists, tourists' perception*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is travel for pleasure or business; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours.[3] Tourism may be international, or within the traveller's country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours, business and other purposes".[3,5]

Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments.

The main purpose of the paper is to highlight the tourist potential in Caraș-Severin County and the tourists' opinion about it.

Caraș-Severin County is situated in a special natural setting, with a mountainous relief, a rich and varied forest and hunting ground, a representative hydrographic network, but also a special cultural and historical heritage [4]. All these are elements that favor the development of tourism in various forms, being a tourist destination of great attractiveness [1,2].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Starting from the statistical data regarding the records of the tourist accommodation establishments on tourist destinations (Semenic, Baile Herculane, Caransebes, Muntele Mic, Danube Cluster - Nerei Valley - Valea Almăjului, Resita), information on the distribution of seats of these structures; their distribution according to the classification categories (stars or daisies), but also the distribution of the accommodation units in the tourist accommodation units by type of units, we presented the evolution of the number of arrivals of the foreign and Romanian tourists, as well as the evolution of the number of nights in the structures of tourist reception for both Romanian tourists and foreign tourists.

The data collection tool is a questionnaire with 19 questions.

Through this questionnaire we obtained data on the perception of respondents on the tourism potential in Caraș-Severin County. In the questionnaire, I chose questions of scale and closed questions.

Sampling Plan - The population to which the questionnaire was administered was made up of a sample of 100 respondents over the age of 18 on the territory of Romania. The administration of the questionnaire took place in the online environment. It was

addressed to those who have not visited the county for touristic purposes to find out if their county tourism is known and if they are interested in visiting the county in the future. After that, he addressed only the respondents who have already visited the county for tourism (80 respondents) to receive useful information about their opinion on the county's tourism potential and the way in which it is capitalized.

The collection period was approximately one month from 10.05.2018 to 11.06.2018.

Finally, I presented the main conclusions drawn from the interpretation of the results obtained from the analysis, based on the questionnaire on the perception of tourists regarding the tourist potential of Caraş-Severin County.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The main indicators of tourism activity analysis are: *the number of tourist accommodation establishments with the functions of accommodation, the number of tourists arriving and the number of overnight stays.*

- Accommodation structures with accommodation functions:

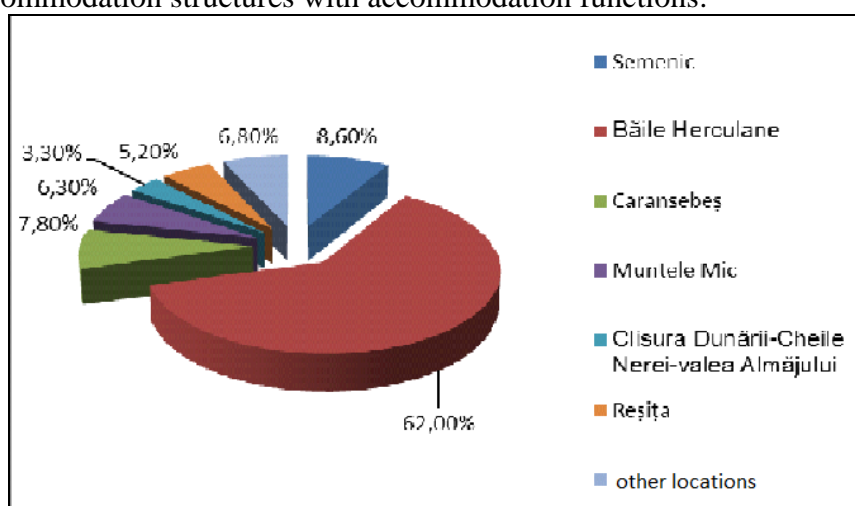


Figure 1. Distribution of accommodation places in tourist accommodation units by tourist destinations in Caraş - Severin County

Source: DADPP Tourist Promotion Service Database of the County Council of Caraş-Severin-2018

According to the database of the Tourist Promotion Service within the Directorate of Administration of the Public and Private Domain (DADPP) of Caraş-Severin County, 267 accommodation units with classified accommodation functions are registered in the county, with a number of 9,323 accommodation places 4.495 rooms). Of these, 83 accommodation structures and 4976 accommodation places are located in the Baile Herculane tourist resort; 25 accommodation structures, respectively 668 accommodation places in Caransebeş and 15 accommodation structures, respectively 382 accommodation places in Resita [6,7].

Another important contribution to the offer of the county is the Semenik area (37 accommodation structures, 470 rooms, 1018 accommodation places), Poiana Marului (22 accommodation structures, 189 rooms, 404 accommodation places), Muntele Mic (11 structures accommodation, 135 rooms, 332 beds). The Danube Clarion is a very attractive area (26 accommodation structures, 207 rooms, 436 accommodation places), and the Nerei - Almăjului Valley area, although attractive, is very little appreciated from the tourist point of view.

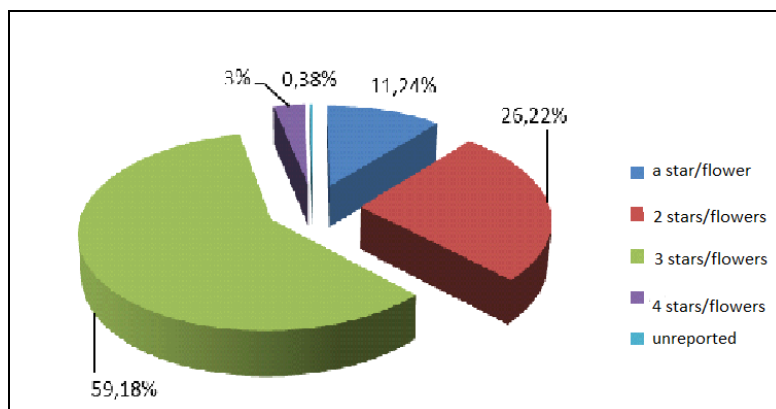


Figure 2. Distribution of accommodation places in tourist accommodation units by categories of classification in Caraș County-Severin

Source: DADPP Tourist Promotion Service Database of the County Council of Caraș-Severin-2018

The qualitative analysis of the accommodation places in the tourist accommodation establishments with existing functions at county level shows a high concentration of them in the two- and three-star categories / flowers (26.22% and 59.18%, respectively) and a poor representation in the category one star / flower (11.24%) and 4 stars / flowers (0.38%)

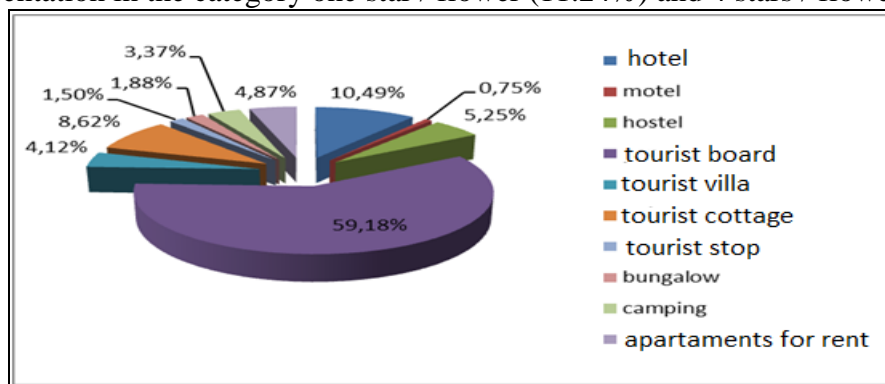


Figure 3. Structure of accommodation places in tourist accommodation units by types of units in Caraș - Severin County 2018

Source: DADPP Tourist Promotion Service Database of the County Council of Caraș-Severin-2018

By type of accommodation structure, the high share of accommodation places in tourist accommodation type structures (59.18%), followed by hotel type tourist structures (10.49%) and tourist cottages (8.62%). Other types of accommodation units are under-represented: hostels - 5.25%, tourist villas - 4.12%, etc.

Table 1

The evolution of the number of tourist arrivals

Year / Tourists	2015	2016	2017
Romanian	161695	171564	182410
Foreigners	9931	9631	9558
Total	171626	181195	191968

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Arrivals of tourists in tourist accommodation establishments with functions of tourist accommodation

The evolution of the number of arrivals of Romanian tourists in the establishments of tourists' reception has, according to the above table, increased continuously over the analyzed period. In 2016 there is an increase of 0.4% in arrivals compared to 2015 and in

2017 by 0.4 more arrivals than in the previous year and by 0.8% more than in 2015. As regards the number of arrivals of foreign tourists shows a continuous decrease during the studied period, it decreases in 2016 by 0.47% compared to 2015 and in 2017 by 0.41% as compared to the previous year and by 0.88% fewer arrivals compared to 2015. Thus, we can talk about the interest of Romanian tourists in visiting Caraş-Severin County and the lack of interest of foreign tourists during the period considered for visiting. The lack of interest of the foreign tourists in visiting the county could contribute both to the lack of promotion and to the state of roads and access roads.

Table 2

The evolution of the number of overnight stays

Year / Tourists	2015	2016	2017
Romanian	666286	658059	670948
Foreigners	44740	30244	23974
Total	711026	688303	694222

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Arrivals of tourists in tourist accommodation establishments with functions of tourist accommodation

The evolution of the number of overnight stays of the Romanian tourists in the establishments of tourists' reception has, according to the above table, increased continuously during the period 2015-2016-2017. In 2016 there is an increase in the number of Romanian tourists by approximately 1.9% compared to 2015 and in 2017 the number of arrivals increases by about 1% compared to the previous year and by 2.9% as compared to 2015. As for the number of foreign tourists, there is a decrease during the whole analyzed period of the number of nights in the tourist accommodation structures, in 2016 they decrease by 1.9% compared to 2015 and by 2017 by 0.9% compared to the year 2016 and by 2.8% compared to 2015. This situation is due both to the decrease in the number of arrivals of foreign tourists in the county during the period 2016-2017 but possibly also to the quality-price ratio in terms of accommodation conditions in certain tourist areas in the county.

Table 3

The profile of the respondents

Profile variables	Categories of variables	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Age	18-25 years	59	73.8%
	26-35 years old	12	15%
	36-50 years	7	8.8 %
	over 50 years	25	2.5 %
Sex	Male	29	37.2%
	Female	51	63.8%
Income	No own incomes	22	27,5%
	400-1000 lei	6	7.5%
	1000-1600 lei	13	16.3%
	1700-3000 lei	24	30%
	Over 3000 lei	15	18.8%

Source: own processing

Analyzing the profile of the respondents, 73.8% of the total respondents are aged between 18 and 25, 63.8% of the total respondents are female, and 30% of the respondents have income between 1700 and 3000 lei

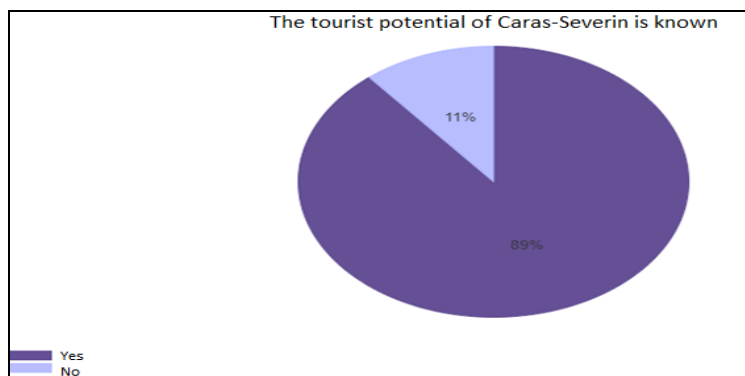


Figure 4. Relevant questions

From the above figure it can be seen that for 89 of the total respondents the tourist potential of the county is known and for 11 of them the tourist potential is unknown.

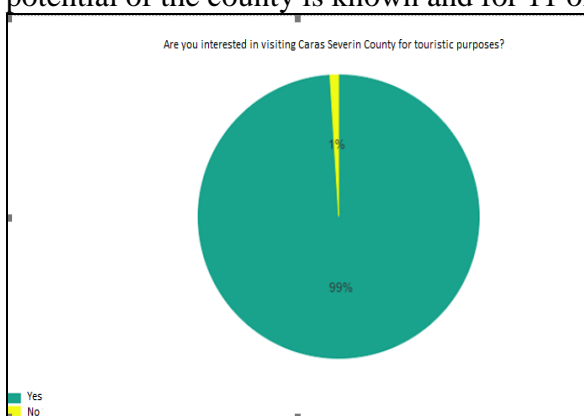


Figure 5. The interest of visiting the county of Caras Severin

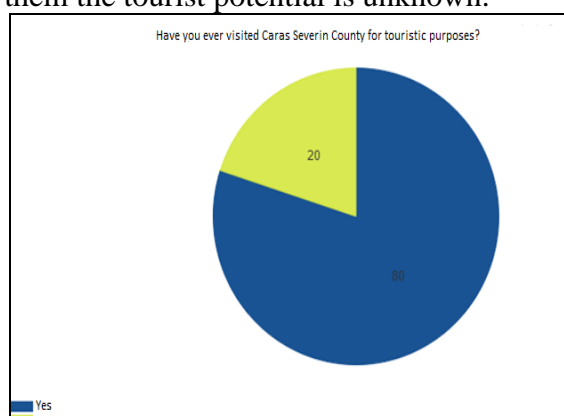


Figure 6. The respondents visited the county of Caras-Severin

From the above figure it is observed that for 99 respondents they are interested in the future visit of Caras-Severin County for tourism and a single respondent is not interested in visiting it.

The above figure highlights the fact that 80 respondents visited the county of Caras-Severin for tourism purposes and 20 of them have not yet visited the county but according to the figure referring to their interest in visiting the county in the future, 19 of them want to visit county in the future.

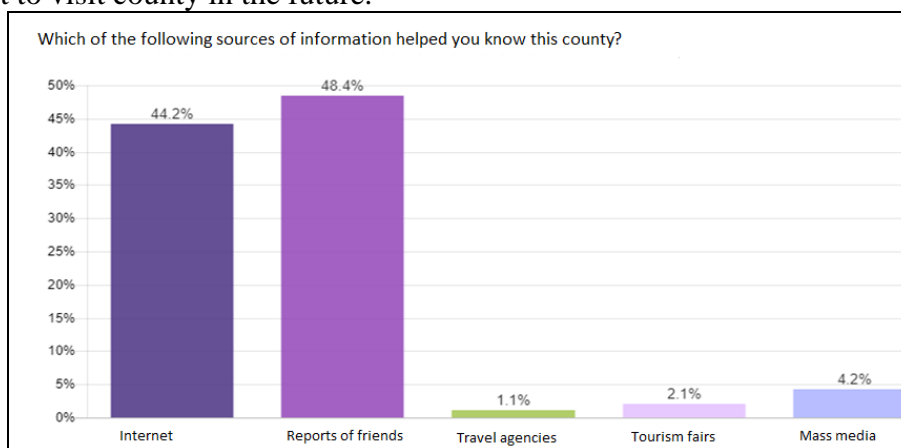


Figure 7. Information sources

From the graph presented above, it is noticed that the main sources of information for the respondents about the county touristic share are the accounts of friends or relatives (48.4%) and the internet (44.2%).

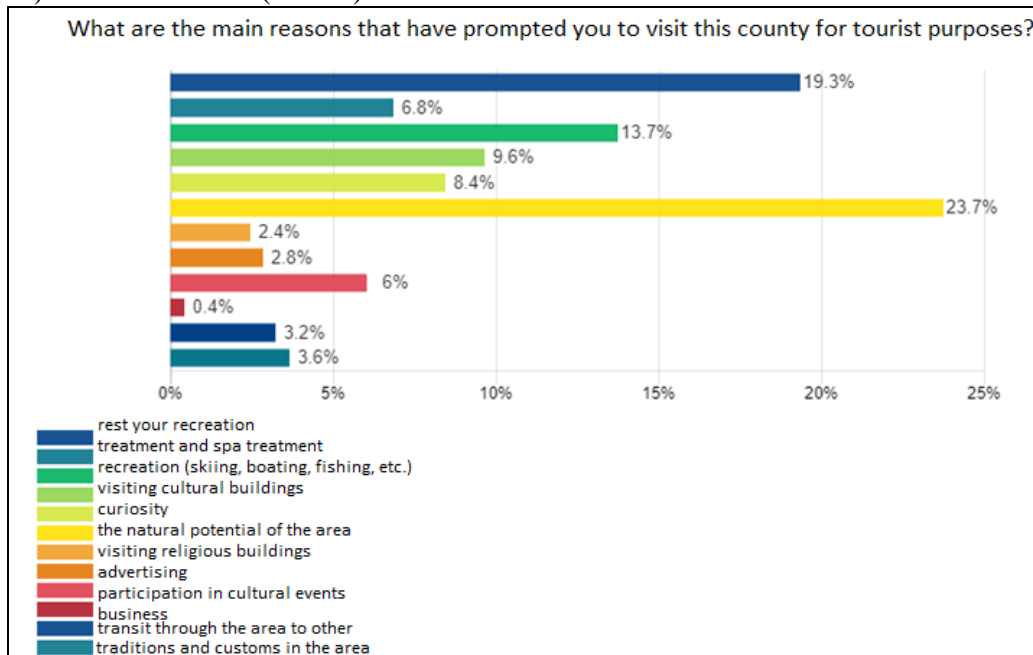


Figure 8. The main reasons for visiting this county for tourism purposes

From the chart above, the main reasons for the respondents to visit Caraş-Severin County are the natural potential of the area (23.7%), rest and recreation (19%) and recreation (13.7%).

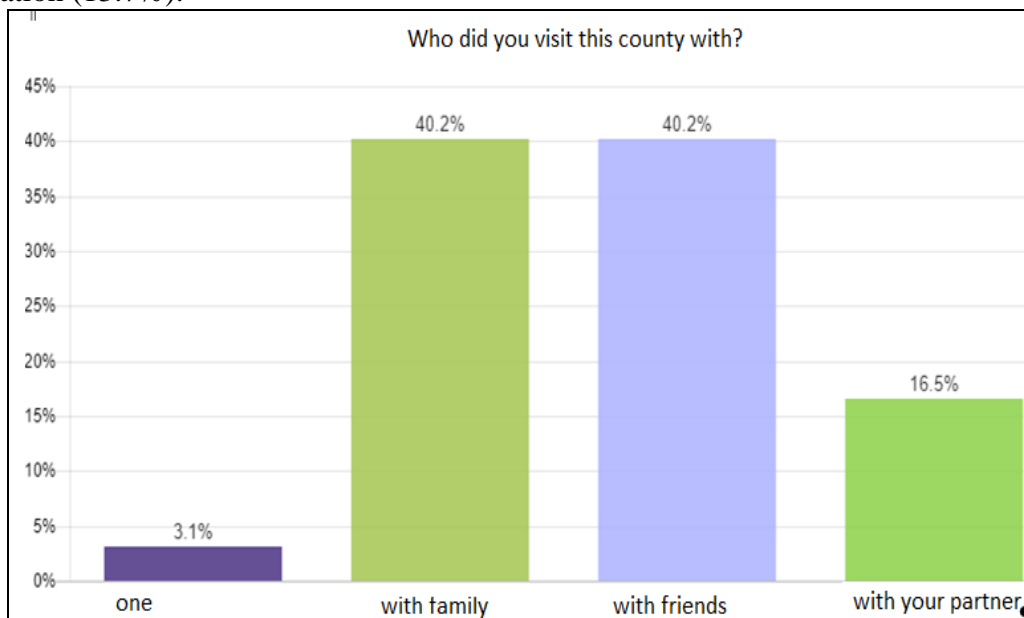


Figure 9. The people with whom the county has been visited

From the chart above, 40.2% of the total of 80 respondents who visited Caraş-Severin County for tourism purposes were accompanied by family or friends.

From the chart above, the main types of tourism practiced by the respondents who visited the county for tourism purposes are: mountain tourism (27.6%), weekend tourism (19.9%) and balneary tourism (13.1%).

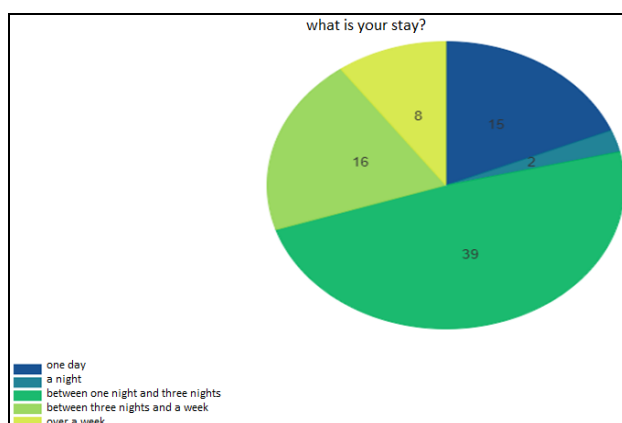


Figure 10. Length of stay

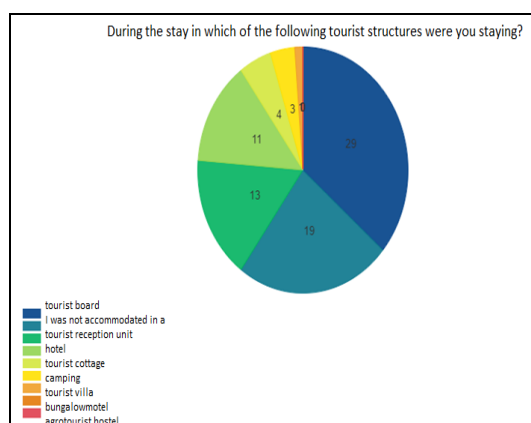


Figure 11. Tourist accommodation structures

According to the figure above for 39 (48.8%) of the total number of respondents, the length of stay in Caraș-Severin County falls between one night and three nights.

During the stay 29 (36.3%) of the total number of respondents were accommodated in tourist boarding houses, 19 (23.8%) of them were not accommodated in a tourist accommodation unit and 13 (16.3%) of them were accommodated at the hotel.

Table 4

What is your opinion on the following statements?			
Statements	Respondents' opinion (total disagreement-disagreement-so and so-agreement-total agreement)	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
"There are enough accommodation units (hotels, cottages, villas, pensions, etc.) in Caraș Severin County."	Agreement	33	<u>41,3%</u>
"The quality of accommodation is at the level of expectations."	Agreement	39	<u>48,8%</u>
"There are enough public catering establishments."	Agreement	33	<u>41,3%</u>
"The quality of public catering services is at the level of expectations."	Agreement	32	<u>40%</u>
"The quality-price ratio for accommodation and catering is a satisfactory one"	Disagreement	34	<u>42,5%</u>
"Providers of tourist services in accommodation and catering establishments are properly trained and have irreproachable behavior."	Disagreement	36	<u>45%</u>

Source: own processing

According to the above table regarding the respondents' opinion on the aforementioned statements, we note that they have expressed over 40% of the agreement that there are sufficient accommodation and catering in Caraș-Severin County and at the same time 40% expressed the agreement on the quality of accommodation and catering. As regards the quality-price ratio, 42.5% of the total respondents expressed their disagreement over the claim that they would be a satisfactory one and, in terms of training, the behavior of the tourist services providers in the tourist and catering establishments, they also expressed their disagreement in a proportion of 45%.

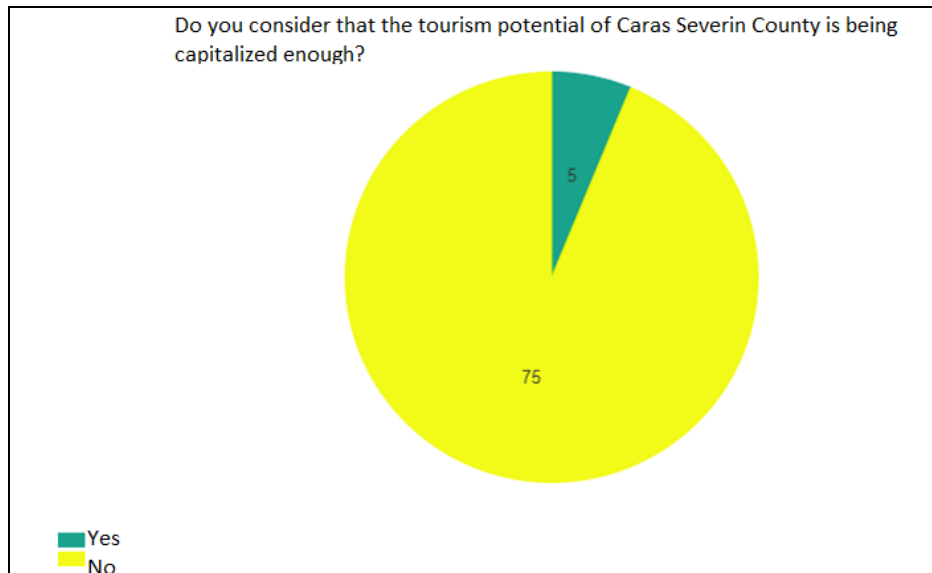


Figure 12. To capitalize on the tourism potential of Caras Severin county

From the above figure it can be noticed that the question regarding the utilization of the tourist potential 93.8% of the total number of respondents who visited the county for tourism purposes considers that its potential is not sufficiently exploited.

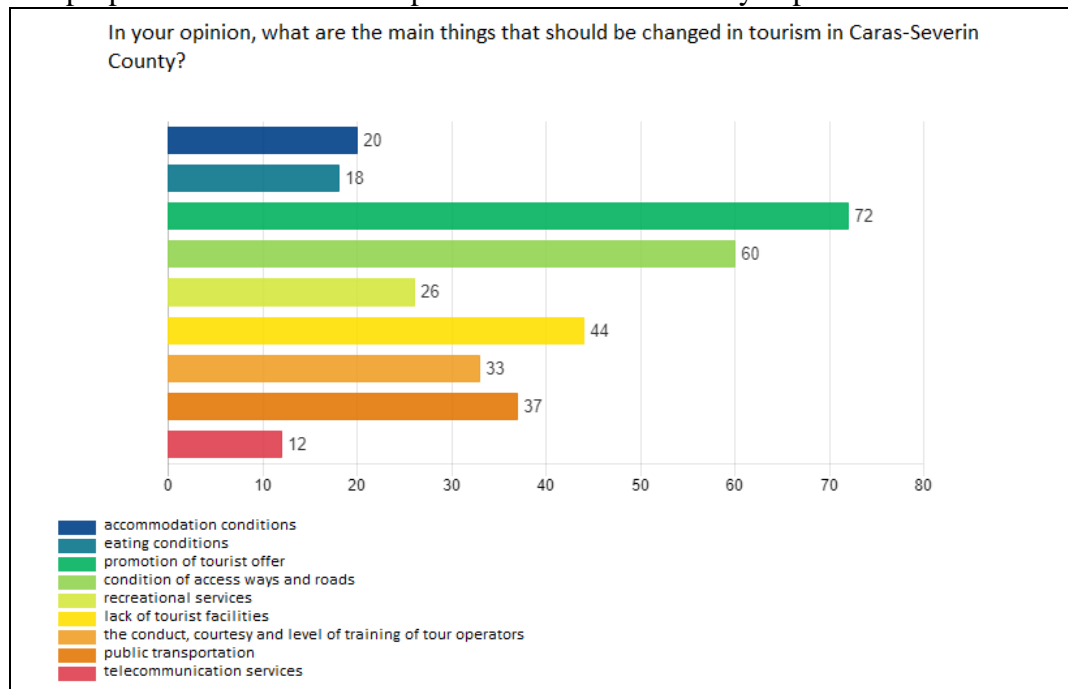


Figure 13. The aspects that must be improved

From the above graph it is observed that 22.4% of the total respondents consider that the promotion of the tourist offer is the main thing that should be changed in capitalizing on the touristic potential of the county, 18.6% of them consider that the state of the access roads and of the roads should be improved and 13.7% of them think that a minus in terms of tourism in Caraş-Severin is also due to the lack of tourist facilities (tourist markings).

Table 5

The following areas representative of the county's natural tourism potential

Touristic areas	Respondents' opinion (I have not heard of this area / I have heard of this area but have not visited / visited this area)	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Tourist complex Semenic-Văliug-Crivaia	I have not heard of this area	1	1.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	12	15%
	I visited this area	67	83.8%
Gărăna-Trei Ape	I have not heard of this area	6	7.5%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	17	21.3%
	I visited this area	57	71.3%
Reșița-Secu	I have not heard of this area	6	7.5%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	14	17.5%
	I visited this area	60	75%
Bocea-Munciei Dognecei	I have not heard of this area	15	18.8%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	35	43.8%
	I visited this area	30	37.5%
Caras Comarnic's Keys	I have not heard of this area	8	10%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	45	56.3%
	I visited this area	27	33.8%
Minis Keys	I have not heard of this area	8	10%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	53	66.3%
	I visited this area	19	23.8%
Buhui-Mărghitaș-Anina	I have not heard of this area	10	12.5%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	51	63.8%
	I visited this area	19	23.6%
Nerei-Beușnița's Keys	I have not heard of this area	5	6.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	31	38.8%
	I visited this area	44	55%
Oravița-Valea Ciclovei	I have not heard of this area	9	11.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	48	60%
	I visited this area	23	28.8%
Moldova Nouă-Clisura Dunării	I have not heard of this area	1	1.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	13	16.3%
	I visited this area	66	82.5%
Băile Herculane	I have not heard of this area	1	1.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	5	6.3%
	I visited this area	74	92.5%
Valea Cernei-Domogled	Nu am auzit de această zonă	10	12.5%
	Am auzit de această zonă dar nu am vizitat-o	33	41.3%
	Am vizitat această zonă	37	46.3%
Poiana Ruscă	I have not heard of this area	5	6.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	53	66.3%
	I visited this area	22	27.5%
Caransebeș-Muntele Mic	I have not heard of this area	1	1.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	23	28.8%
	I visited this area	56	70%
Oțelu Roșu-Poiana Mărului	I have not heard of this area	0	0%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	30	37.5%
	I visited this area	50	62.5%
Marga-Valea Bistrei	I have not heard of this area	18	22.5%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	49	61.3%
	I visited this area	13	16.3%
Rusca Montană-Valea Ruscăi	I have not heard of this area	13	16.3%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	49	61.3%
	I visited this area	18	22.5%
Țara gugulanilor Tourist complex Semenic-Văliug-Crivaia	I have not heard of this area	16	20%
	I heard about this area but I did not visit it	45	56.3%
	I have not heard of this area	19	23.7%

Source: own processing

According to the above table, the most visited areas representative of the natural potential of the county are: Baile Herculane resort, 92.5% of the total respondents visited this area, 83.8% of the total respondents visited the tourist complex Semenic-Văliug-Crivaia, 82.5% of them visited the Danube Cliff-Moldova Noua and 75% of them visited the town of Reșița. As far as the area that most respondents did not hear, this is the Land of

Gugulans-Tsarcu-Munte Gugu, 20% of the respondents have not heard of this area until now.

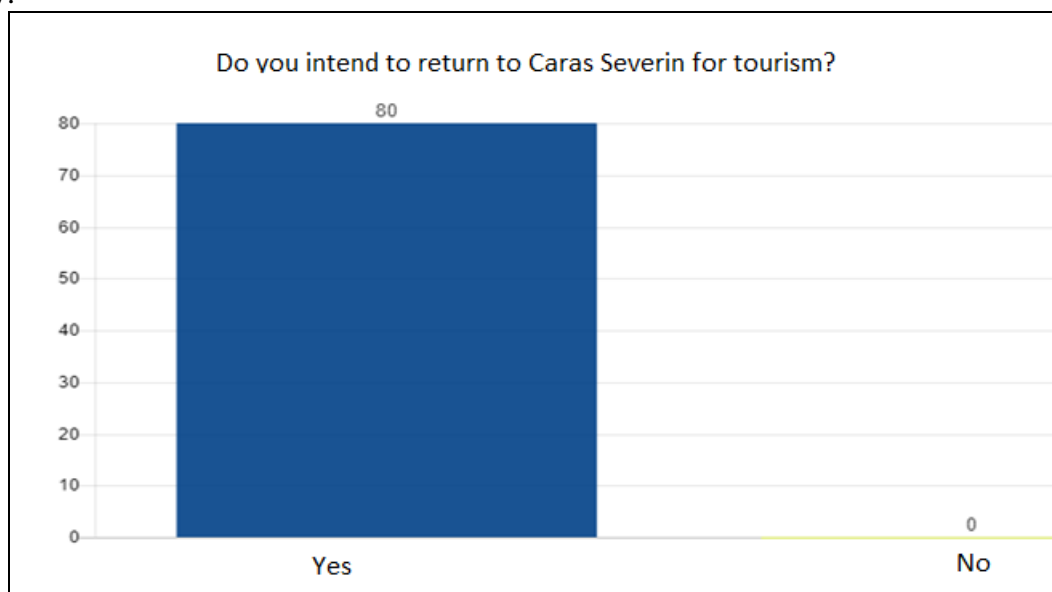


Figure 14. The desire to return n the area studied

From the chart above, 100% of the total of 80 respondents who visited Caraş-Severin County for tourism purposes intend to return to tourism in the county.

CONCLUSIONS

In the study highlighting the touristic potential of the county and the questionnaire on the perception of the tourists regarding the tourism potential of Caraş-Severin County, we came to the following conclusions:

- as far as the county's natural tourism potential is concerned, it is very rich and diversified. In the county are protected areas with extensive ravines, nature reserves, national parks, very rich biodiversity and natural unframed surfaces.

- the geographical position of the county is very favorable, the relief is very varied, the hydrographic network is also very complex (from surface waters, natural and artificial lakes, favorable to recreation, underground waters, etc.)

- the county has unpolluted rural space (especially in the high areas), which favors tourism by tourists and ecotourism. Regarding this, ecotourism and rural tourism can play a very important role for county tourism by capitalizing this potential, but these are currently very little valorised, promoted and known by the population. The protected areas occupy a high area in the county, but the infrastructure is very poorly developed, which points to insufficient capitalization of this important natural potential of the county.

- the county also has an important asset because of the natural resources that make it possible to practice balneary tourism and wellness. In this respect, the Baile Herculane resort is known, it can play a very important role for tourism in Caraş-Severin by modernizing and rehabilitating the historical heritage. These resources are also found in Oravița but require rehabilitation, modernization and promotion because they are not very well known among the population.

- as far as the perception of the tourists is concerned, we have come to interpret the results obtained on the basis of the questionnaire to the conclusion that the natural potential plays a very important role in the choice of Caraş-Severin County as a tourist destination, being the main reason why the respondents visited the county for tourism purposes . They

also chose the main types of tourism in the county, mountain tourism and balneary tourism. Among the main tourist areas representative for the natural tourism potential of the county visited by the respondents are Baile Herculane, Semenice-Văliug-Crivaia Resort, Danube Cluster- Moldova Nouă and areas with a strong natural potential are not known among the respondents. In this situation, we can conclude that the natural potential of the county is not sufficiently valorised and promoted.

Regarding the anthropic potential, we conclude that the county has strong anthropic resources and, as far as the respondents' opinion is concerned, the most known and visited objectives are those in Baile Herculane, Resita, Caransebes.

Also a valuable resource for the county is industrial patrimony. Thus, by capitalizing on it, as well as by the cultural heritage, through investments and rehabilitation programs aimed both at the architectural, industrial, cultural, furnaces, mines, railway infrastructure, the cultural tourism could be further developed in the county and industrial.

Regarding the forms and types of tourism that can be practiced in the county, we conclude that these are complex, including mountain, spa, scientific, speotourism, adventure tourism, agrotourism, ecotourism, religious, cultural, industrial, gastronomic tourism. but also opportunities for recreation - climbing, paragliding, cyclotourism, expeditions, waterfall, etc.

Regarding the specific tourist infrastructure, the county has areas that, although they have a huge tourist potential, are poorly developed from this point of view, which brings a significant minus for the tourism in this county. According to the statistical data, about 60% of the tourist accommodation units belong to the Baile Herculane resort. Also, as far as the tourists' opinion on what should be changed in the tourism in Caraș-Severin is found in a significant percentage - the state of the access roads and the roads - the means of public transport - the accommodation and food conditions public, which supports the idea that infrastructure needs to be improved.P

Among the respondents' main views on what should be improved in Caraș-Severin tourism are the promotion of the county and the lack of tourist bookmarks. Regarding the tourist markings, it is necessary to restore them and revitalize the hiking tourism. In this respect, the access roads to the main tourist attractions, the marking of tourist paths, the placement of informative panels, etc. should be rehabilitated. both in hiking and tourist areas.

Also, the tourism potential is insufficiently promoted, a conclusion we reached following the survey based on a questionnaire where from a total of 100 respondents, 11 of them have not heard of the county's tourism potential to date, although this is very, very rich but unfortunately little promoted and thus little known among the population.

After interpreting the results obtained on the basis of the questionnaire, I came to the conclusion that the respondents learned from the tourism potential of the county as much as possible from the accounts of friends, knowledge, family, which again highlights the fact that the county is not sufficiently promoted by other sources. We also come to the conclusion that mountain tourism, weekend tourism and balneary tourism are among the main types of tourism practiced in the county. Approximately 87% of respondents reached the county's tourist destination and most of the respondents spent between 3 nights and one week. Most of them have chosen as a tourist accommodation unit the tourist board and have expressed their agreement on the quality of accommodation and catering and the disagreement on the price-quality ratio, thus concluding that the prices charged for accommodation and catering are great compared to the quality and the expectations of the tourists.

Respondents also voiced dissatisfaction with the level of readiness, courtesy and behavior of service providers, concluding that the lack of considerable staff in most of the tourist areas in the county is saying.

Regarding the valorisation of the tourist potential of Caraş-Severin County, almost all respondents (93.8%) said that it was insufficiently capitalized on the insufficient promotion of the county, the infrastructure, as well as the lack of tourist facilities (tourist markings) . However, we conclude that 80% of all respondents intend to return to the county for tourism purposes.

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